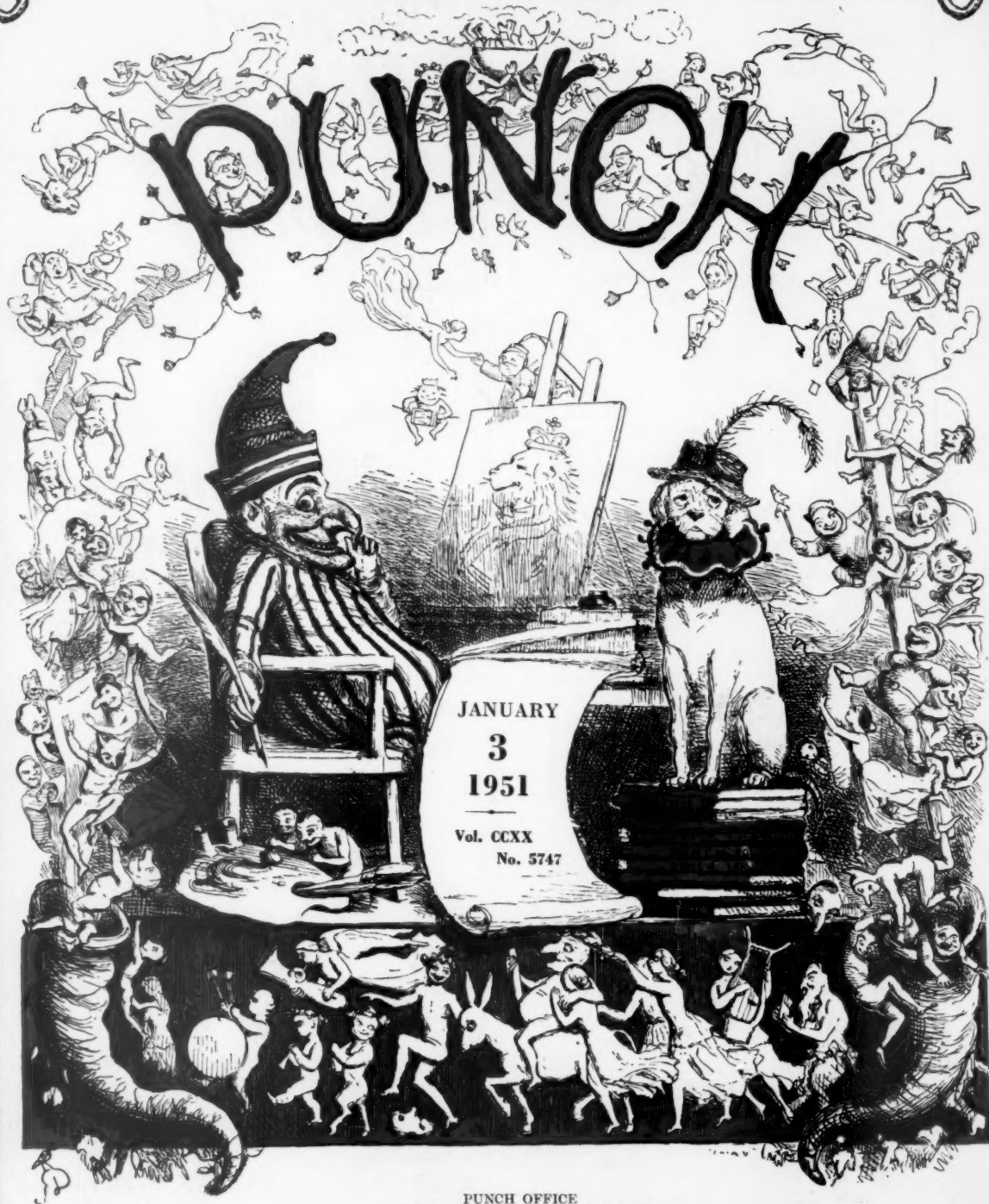


6^p

PUNCH OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI—WEDNESDAY JANUARY 3 1951

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PUNCH OFFICE
10 BOUVERIE STREET LONDON E.C.4

All this...



and a 7 too!

ABDULLA

No. 7 'Virginia' Cigarettes 20 for 3/10
ALSO Abdulla Turkish and Egyptian

"We need VITAMIN C **Ribena** BLACKCURRANT JUICE as much as the children"

It's done the youngsters so much good, we should take it too! It's pure blackcurrant juice which is more than three times as rich in Vitamin C as orange juice, plus cane sugar. As the Ministry of Food says, "A good supply of Vitamin C will make all the difference

between that dreaded feeling of exhaustion and a feeling of exuberant good health."

DELICIOUS RIBENA is the health drink for the whole family—get a bottle today

Contains not less than 20 mgms. of Vitamin C per fluid oz.



VITAMIN C
Ribena
BLACKCURRANT JUICE
fight's fatigue!

From all chemists 3/3d. Highly concentrated
MADE BY CARTER'S OF COLEFORD

Youngest of the family



the
Coventry Climax
T.S.M. 1500 lb.
model

This new T.S.M. model brings vital savings of non-productive time into wide new fields of industry—those restricted spaces where larger and heavier fork trucks cannot be used with advantage.

It goes through a 3 ft. door with room to spare. Turns in a 56 inch radius. Travels loaded at 6½ m.p.h. Stacks up to 9 ft. 4 cylinder 8 h.p. petrol engine.

COVENTRY CLIMAX fork trucks

For details of the Coventry Climax Models best suited to your needs, write to
DEPT. 13, COVENTRY CLIMAX ENGINES LIMITED, WIDDRINGTON ROAD WORKS, COVENTRY



"Pussy cat, Pussy cat, where have you been?"

"I've been to London to see the Queen."

... and those of us who live outside London make many similar journeys, though admittedly with little hope of so dramatic an encounter with so eminent a personage. However, the traditional ceremonies that make up the familiar and beloved pageantry of the London year do draw many thousands of our customers to town. We are pleased to see them come and we do our best to make their visits free from unnecessary worries. For instance we will gladly arrange for them to cash their cheques at any of our 450 branches in the London district. Thus there is no need for them to carry large sums in cash; and this is a wise precaution, for among the members of a large crowd there are usually those who are animated more by motives of personal gain than by the simple feelings of loyalty which characterised our friend the cat!


BARCLAYS BANK LIMITED



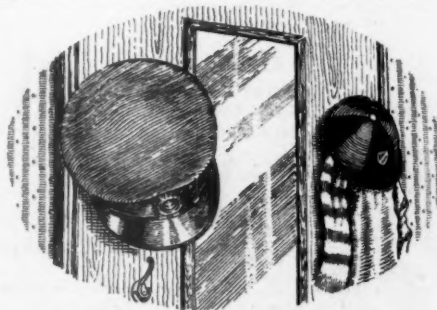
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Fine old Scotch Whisky



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John Smith's peaked cap is on the peg. For four glorious months he is home on leave after an arduous two years' spell of duty in the cable ship *Norseman*. His ship is one of a fleet of eight that patrols the seas looking after the submarine cables of Cable & Wireless Ltd., which spread like the tentacles of a beneficent octopus throughout the greater part of the globe.

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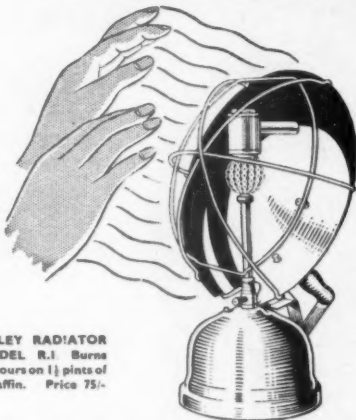
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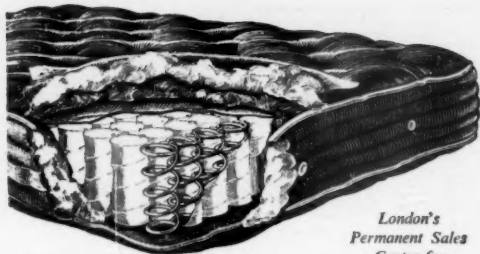
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KITCHEN COSTS
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"Good housewives are good economists too—that's why I demanded a Servitor. It's the latest and best cooker on the market. It saves me money because it burns any kind of solid fuel and there's nothing to go wrong. It saves me time because it lights easily and there's plenty of oven room, boiling space and as much domestic hot water as I need. Cleaning is simple—a quick rub over the vitreous enamel finish, and there you are!" Ask your dealer!

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The SERVITOR
COOKER & WATER HEATER

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"It gives me great pleasure to thank you once more for a year of smoking satisfaction. In these faddish days it is indeed comforting to have dealings with a firm whose service and products are so carefully guarded."

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Tobacco Blenders
PERTH, SCOTLAND

Price 7s. per lb., Post Paid, send 5s. for sample quarter-lb. tin, Post Free



IN LOW GEAR

"Black mark, Basil, you're a licensing hour late. Good party last night? Or did you journey from darkest Surrey by post-chaise?"

"No, Gerald, by horseless carriage. Could have sworn I filled the tank—but in the wide open spaces of Hyde Park she spluttered to a standstill."

"Very embarrassing."

"Steam was wafting from the radiator, too, and blue smoke from the brake drums."

"Very trying. Could it be that last night you were suffering from too rich a mixture and failed to top up with Rose's Lime Juice?"

"Painfully true, old boy. Shall we now discuss higher things over a large gin and Rose's?"

ROSE'S—for Gin and Lime

EVERY LETTER TELLS A STORY

We transfer to the
Piccadilly Theatre
Young Liner
Eric Portman

Your handwriting shows fascinating glimpses of your personality. A leading graphologist says that Eric Portman's handwriting is large and forceful, revealing a strong and courageous personality. Passionate likes and dislikes are indicated by the dagger-like t-bars and variation of direction. The half-finished end-o (in "to") and the forked lightning finish of "Piccadilly" show critical outspokenness.



ERIC PORTMAN'S handwriting reveals a strong and courageous personality.

EVERY LETTER you write reflects your personality—not only in your handwriting and the words you choose, but also in the notepaper you write on.

There is no more pleasing notepaper than BASILDON BOND—and none better value. Made by craftsmen

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Treat yourself
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Post Free 25/- 57/6
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LONDON, S.W.3. Phone: KHI 1777

COLD HOMES

One of the Church Army's special Winter activities is the distribution of fuel to the very poorest, the aged, the sick, distressed gentlewomen, etc.

For the sake of those who are in need, the Church Army asks for your kindly support of its Fuel Fund.

Please send your gift to **The Rev. E. WILSON CARLILE**, General Secretary, Church Army, 55, Bryanston Street, W.1.

CHURCH ARMY

**BACK
TO
SCHOOL**

an important
detail

Clothes won't get lost when identified with Cash's Woven Names.

3 dozen . . . 5/6d.
6 dozen . . . 7/6d.
12 dozen . . . 10/6d.



Obtainable at
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• All orders now promptly executed

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IFCO
BATHROOM
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IS
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Stocked
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Leading
Stores

LIST FREE FROM
IFCO LTD LIVERPOOL 3

New Year resolutions

are made to be broken; but here are some that you will be able to keep—even enjoy keeping

FOR COOKS

I resolve to buy gadgets to save me work and woe—that slicer thing that chops even onions without tears (8/11); or the clever plastic scoop-cum-measure (4/11). And I resolve to buy a set of those cheerful artist-designed pots and pans—aluminium, with bright red handles and knobs—to brighten my kitchen in 1951

FOR HOUSEWIVES

I resolve to spend a whole afternoon at the Army & Navy . . . replenish the linen cupboard from the Stores' huge stocks (still at sensible prices); buy some really good glass cloths (53/- dozen) and be tempted by superb coloured towels and sheets

FOR GARDENERS

I resolve to do my Armchair Gardening thoroughly—to check and replace tools, have cutting tools sharpened—all this at the Stores' Gardening Department. I resolve to buy a little tree syringe (16/6) and use it; to buy a lawn-mower and shock the Browns; to be a green fingered paragon, in fact. H'm!

**Army & Navy
Stores**

EVERYTHING FOR EVERYONE

VICTORIA STREET SW1 • VICTORIA 1254

5 minutes from Victoria Station



January

Good resolutions come with the New Year: why not resolve to open an account with the Midland Bank? You will receive a friendly welcome at your nearest branch and at once enjoy the advantages of a banking service second to none. A booklet entitled "Midland Bank services for you", which you can obtain at any one of the 2,100 branches of the Bank, tells you how simple it is to open an account and of the many advantages which will follow.

MIDLAND BANK LIMITED

Perfection

We believe that the Belling Streamline Electric Cooker is the finest in the world. Beautiful in appearance and perfect in performance, it is in a class by itself. In operation it is completely automatic, the extra large oven and all the boiling plates maintaining any desired heat. The oven is illuminated when the door is open, and cooking can be watched through the inner glass door without any fear of being spoilt. Your usual electrical shop or showroom will gladly give you details.

YOU CAN'T BEAT A

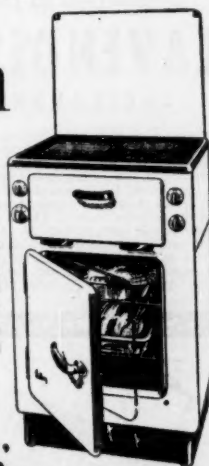
Belling

CLOTHES DRYER
—ideal for the small house or flat—
a boon to mothers with very young
children. Dries the washing quickly and
thoroughly. £11 19s. 5d. inc. tax.

MEDIEVAL FIRE
An impressive period design with realistic
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inc. tax (with coal £19 19s. 1d.).
Other Belling electric fires from 45/3d.

Ask for details at your Electrical Shop or Showroom, or if in any
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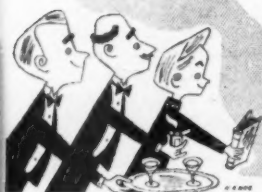
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ADDRESS, in confidence. The Chairman, Box 2000. The senior members of the advertiser's staff are aware of this advertisement.

They say



*the service is
wonderful at the*
**CAVENDISH
EASTBOURNE**

Everything is done to make your stay at the Cavendish something really worth remembering. Excellent cuisine, and all the comfort you could possibly desire are always yours. It's beautifully placed on the sea-front, and has a first-class orchestra for dinner-dances. That's why so many people book well ahead. Only an hour and a quarter from Victoria. For terms and information write or ring the Manager, Philip Churchman, Eastbourne 2740. Proprietors: Pimm's Ltd.

*They say the
Era of Elegance
died with the Prince
Regent. They affirm
that Aristocracy went
out when Industrial
Democracy came in . . .*

*And yet, as you light your
SOBRANIE—in cigarette or in pipe—
the pages of history turn back.*



SOBRANIE

*Once again the
connoisseur is in authority.
And once again the few are leading
even if the many do not
care to follow . . . There
is in the aroma and
smooth satisfaction of
SOBRANIE a perfect
answer to the fret and
turmoil of This
Modern Age.*



SOBRANIE LIMITED ★ 130-4 CITY ROAD ★ LONDON EC1



Aching head? stomach wrong?

Alka Seltzer

Alka-Seltzer... life's a song!

Head throbbing? Feeling all in? An Alka-Seltzer tablet in a glass of water (hot or cold) will soon set you right. First, Alka-Seltzer's double-action soothes pain—extra fast. Then it neutralises excess acid, often the root of your distress. Try it! Millions sold yearly.



ALL WANT LIGHT

—a light that's strong,
but warm and friendly.

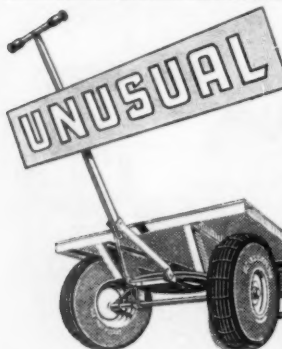
carried by a lamp which stays
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touch, attractively finished in
beige, cream or black. Not
too expensive either!



Ask your retailer for a
HORSTMANN LAMP

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Direct to you from the
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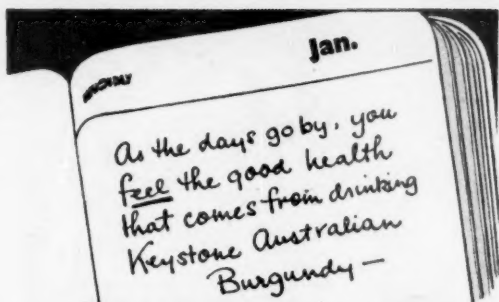
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Keep it Handy*



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The good wine that
makes every meal a banquet
Bottled and guaranteed by Stephen Smith & Co. Ltd., London, E.3. (10)

'CHASERS AND COURSES



Taking the water in the 1949 Grand National, Wot No Sun lands ahead of the winner Russian Hero, followed by San Michele and a loose horse.

Aintree (L.H. Course)

World's Most Famous Steeplechase Course

Two mixed meetings are held here annually, in November and March, combining jumping with flat racing. The first Grand National, then called Grand Liverpool Steeplechase, was held in 1839, and appropriately won by a horse named Lottery. The race nowadays is worth about £10,000, the largest prize in 'Chasing.

The present Grand National course was made in 1888, and has 16 jumps, all of which except the formidable "Chair" and the water are taken twice.

There is no obstacle to satisfactory betting when your account is with Cope's Confidential Credit Service. For 55 years, Cope's have led the way for integrity and dependability. "Off-the-course" backers find in Cope's the perfect, personal turf account, any service. Please let us know if you would like a free copy of our latest brochure—it's of more than usual interest.

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LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON E.C.4

"The World's Best Known Turf Accountants"



FREEBOOTER. Winner of 1930 Grand National, owned by Mrs. L. Brotherton.



SULPHUR



"BRING me fire, that I may purify the house with sulphur" wrote Homer in the Odyssey. This yellow rock, which burns to form choking fumes, has been known since the earliest days of civilisation. Pliny describes the surface deposits of sulphur in Sicily and explains how it was used in medicine and for bleaching cloth. The Sicilian deposits were for centuries the main source of sulphur, but today the vast underground beds in the United States provide most of the world's needs. Industry uses sulphur for bleaching and agriculture for spraying fruit trees. Medicine has always used sulphur, which is one of the elements in Epsom salts and the healing waters of Spas. It is also a constituent of drugs like the sulphonamides. But the greatest use of sulphur is in sulphuric acid, a chemical so vital to modern industry that its consumption is a guide to a nation's industrial activity.

I.C.I. makes hundreds of thousands of tons of sulphuric acid every year. It is essential in the manufacture of fertilizers, textiles, dyestuffs, drugs and plastics. Without sulphuric acid industry could not carry on.

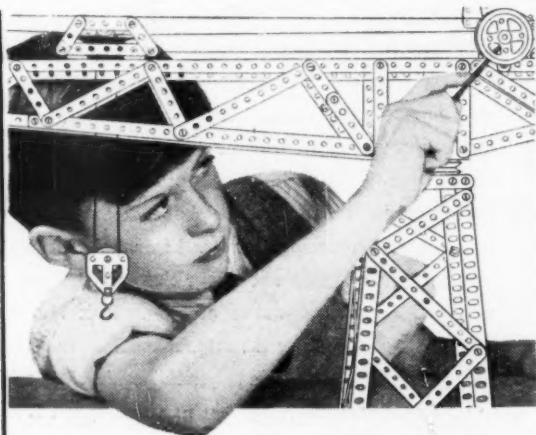




The Younger Generation

Young people today like to think for themselves. It is, therefore, all the more pleasant to record that so many of them decide to 'bank with the Westminster'. Quite often they are continuing a family tradition. But this, we believe, counts less than the knowledge that they will at all times receive from the Westminster Bank personal attention and a friendly welcome, even though their accounts may perhaps be small . . . The Manager of your local branch will be glad of an opportunity to tell you more about the Bank and its services

WESTMINSTER BANK LIMITED



"One more bolt, Dad—and I've done it!"

Exciting job, making a model crane with Meccano—a proper engineering job that really works. When you've played with one model you take it to pieces and build another. That's why it's so exciting to be given a Meccano Outfit. Why not next birthday?

MECCANO

MADE IN ENGLAND BY MECCANO LTD.



Go where
summer spends the winter!

The choice is yours . . .

Bermuda? . . . the Bahamas or the West Indies? . . . where gentle trade winds whisper in the tropic sunshine.

Portugal, perhaps? . . . East or South Africa? . . . South America? . . . where summer spends so much of every winter.

Best of all, it takes so little time by Speedbird—a matter of hours, or a few days at most—to reach the winter sunshine retreat of your choice.

Free advice and information available on request from your local B.O.A.C. Appointed Agent or B.O.A.C. Airways Terminal, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1. Telephone: VICtoria 2323. Early reservation advisable.

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FLY BRITISH BY **B.O.A.C.**

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"Mummy knows
what's
good"



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Sweet Meal
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**McVITIE
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Makers of Finest Quality Biscuits

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SECOND HALF OF THE CENTURY

I MAKE it a rule, at the beginning of every half-century, to practise divination. Readers like to know what is in store for them, within limits. But it's hard pounding nowadays. Crystals are up again, and it's too cold for astrology. One has to fall back, not without relief, on older methods.

No public statue has recently run blood. This is a good thing in its way, though inconclusive; and I state it on the authority of a policeman who tapped me on the shoulder in Trafalgar Square while I was marking out, with my wand, that part of the heavens within which I intended to make my observations of the flight of birds. It is important to get this part marked out accurately, and one should also, strictly speaking, pitch a tent before beginning to observe, but this, after some talk with the policeman, I forbore to do. In return he answered my question about the public statues with a civil enough negative, and then moved on.

I observed eleven thousand six hundred and nine birds to my right and rather more to my left, but drew no conclusions, since to the first-class augur only the eagle, crow, vulture, raven, owl and hen are significant. I also kept simultaneous watch for such portents as lightning, the appearance of shields in the sky or a fall of stones or milk, but saw nothing. This, again, was evidence of a purely negative kind, and meant only that business could be carried on as if nothing had happened—as, of course, augurally speaking, it had.

Haruspication I confess I set no great store by. After one quick inspection of the entrails of a goose, which left me soothless, I passed on to botanomancy.

All you have to do to be a botanomancer is to write words on fallen leaves and see what chance combinations

the action of the wind makes of them. Experiment has shown me that the writing of words on leaves is, to some extent, a lost art; but eventually I got "War," "Peace" and "Russia" scratched out, or in, and let them loose down the Old Kent Road. Perhaps anyone who finds them will kindly send them to me with a note of time and place, their relative positions each to each, and any other significant details, e.g., any herons seen, whether it was raining blood at the time, etc., etc.? But please do not send unmarked leaves. I have plenty.

Despairing of seeing flames appearing at the points of spears, which would have given me a genuine lead, I spent several unprofitable days feeding pulse to chickens in the hope that some of the food would fall from their beaks. From the sound of the pulse as it strikes the earth it is possible for a man of my education to make reliable prognostications; but this lot of birds were the cleanest feeders I have come across in fifty years. So I fell back on divination *ex divis*, which includes the interpretation of "such minor accidents as sneezing, stumbling, twinkling of the eyes and tinkling of the ears." I was stumbling along Piccadilly, sneezing and twinkling my eyes and tinkling (so far as I was able at short notice) my ears, when I felt a tap on my shoulder and heard a familiar voice ask "What's the meaning of this?"

"It means," I told this adile, "that the second half of the twentieth century is likely to be ushered in with a thundering cold in the head; and whether it thunders on the left or the right is a matter of complete indifference to me."

This prediction has proved correct in all particulars.

H. F. ELLIS

WEATHERWISE

I KNEW an old man weatherwise
With lore of old, and he
Could tell by knowledge of the
skies
What weather there would be.

Of fleecy clouds he told me tales
And what they might portend,
And shapes of ships with golden
sails
That flamed at evening's end.

Of every cloud in pink or gold,
Purple or black, he knew
The secret message that it told,
And what the wind would do.

I saw him once when clouds were
gay
As squirrels' tails outspread.
He told me wind was on its
way.
And it was as he said.

Another time a sunset shone
Scarlet and mauve and rose;
And frost was what he counted on.
And in the night it froze.

One day I saw him by a road
That through a village ran,
Gazing as ever where there glowed
The sky he loved to scan.

And clouds were long and thin and
white,
In level clusters drawn,
Dead straight, an unaccustomed
sight,
But beautiful as dawn.

"And what," I asked, "does that
imply
According to your lore?"
He turned a moment from the sky,
"Why that," he said, "means
war."
DUNSANY

LETTERS TO A YOUNG CITIZEN

DEAR EGBERT,—Now that you
are within sight of your
twenty-first birthday it is your
duty to begin to think seriously
about politics, because by the time
the next General Election comes
along you will probably be entitled
to vote, and I am sure you will want
to take advantage of this high
privilege and sacred trust.

No doubt you think that the
use of the vote is a comparatively
simple matter, and that it will be
sufficient if you go to the meetings
of the various candidates and cast
your vote for the man or woman
who seems to you most likely to be
useful in the House of Commons.

This would never do, because the
first thing to remember is that you
are not really voting for your local
candidate at all but for the party
leaders and the principles that they
stand for. Nowadays this means
Mr. Churchill and his lot, Mr. Attlee
and his lot, or Mr. Clement Davies
and his not-such-a-lot. The correct
procedure before you go to hear the
local candidates at all is to make up
your mind whether you want Mr.
Churchill, or Mr. Attlee, or Mr.

Clement Davies as Prime Minister,
and then to go to the meetings
determined to like the candidate
who is going to support the Prime
Minister of your choice. If by bad
luck he happens to be slightly
imbecile and to look like an ex-
convict who has been released too
soon, it does not matter. And if the
opposition candidate talks sense and
looks a good type it simply means
that he is trying to pull the wool
over your eyes.

The first thing you have to do,
therefore, is to examine the party
leaders and their principal hench-
men, and decide between them, and
to remember that you cannot pick
and choose but must like the
leaders of one party *en bloc* and
dislike the leaders of the other
parties *en bloc*. There are only two
exceptions to this rule, which are
permitted so that you can feel
broad-minded. If you are a Con-
servative you are allowed to like
Mr. Bevin, and if you are a Socialist
you are allowed to like Mr. Eden.

If you decide to be a Liberal
this rule of liking your own leaders
en bloc does not apply, but this only

holds good while the party is strug-
gling for its existence. At the
moment you can be a good Liberal
and dislike several of your own
leaders and all the leaders of the
other parties as well (except Mr.
Bevin and Mr. Eden), which gives
you plenty of scope.

If you decide to be a Socialist
you must start by finding some
reason why Mr. Churchill would be
no good as Prime Minister. To a
young man this may seem rather
difficult, but there is a ready-made
formula for it. Mr. Churchill is a
good Prime Minister in time of war
but useless in time of peace.
Nobody knows why, since nobody
has yet seen him in action as Prime
Minister in time of peace, but it is
a good formula.

If you make up your mind to be
a Conservative it is necessary to be
able to say exactly why Mr. Attlee
is no good as Prime Minister. One
way of doing this is to talk about
the shortage of steaks and the fact
that nobody (except yourself) does
a good day's work nowadays, but as
if you mention these things Social-
ists most unfairly point out that
there were quite a number of men
before the war who did no work at
all and whose families consumed
very little in the way of steaks it is
safer to damn Mr. Attlee as being
too small for the job.

You are not obliged to explain,
as a Conservative, how such a very
small man has survived six years
in his high office, at a time of un-
paralleled difficulty, with unmatched
dignity and imperturbability.

Whether you decide to be a
Conservative or a Socialist your
attitude to Mr. Clement Davies and
the Liberals is clear. They are
betraying the country by exercising
their democratic right to split the
democratic vote.

Dead statesmen of any party
you are allowed to admire, which-
ever party you yourself may choose.
There is one exception to this.
Stanley Baldwin broke the rules by
being quite popular with all parties
during his long years of power, so it
is all right to throw as much mud as
possible at his memory now that he
is no longer in a position to defend
himself.
D. H. BARBER



HAIL AND FAREWELL



"We didn't really need a grand after all, Henry."

GATHERING WINTER FUEL

THE train reaches Surbiton punctually at 6.35 p.m.: at 6.50 I unlock the door of 187 Almshurst Avenue, glance at the bills pinned down by the telephone and receive a routine kiss. At 6.51 I am asked to get the coal in.

Throughout Surbiton tired breadwinners are being asked to perform the same revolting task. We repair torches, light candles, and shuffle out into the night towards the bunkers. For fifteen minutes or so the winter's night winces under a grating, screeching cacophony as frayed shovels are thrust against mounds of frozen slack, as hods are hurled into banks of nuts, cobbles and egg-shaped lumps of compressed dust. It is hell.

I am not of course courting

universal popularity by raising this matter. Only a cad, some people will say, would complain of such a trivial chore when real miners are working extra shifts. Only a weakling, others will say, would moan about a duty that most self-respecting males regard as their inalienable right. Well, I *am* complaining. Coal should be got in by daylight, when it can be distinguished from slate, brick-ends, the dog's bones and dirty snow, when the board that holds back the flood of slack can be kept in place, and when icy water is not dripping from the roof of the shed.

I am complaining now because last night's experience was easily the worst of the winter . . .

It was almost seven o'clock

when I left the house (the *pips* heralding the Light Programme's news sounded as I re-lit the candle for the first time) and the coal-getters of Almshurst Avenue were already hard at work. Oakshot, at No. 217, was bashing away with his hod; Harrison at "The Cedars" was swinging his coal-hammer; and Jayes, next door, was hand-picking an old bed of cobbles reputed to be pre-war Derby Brights. The rasping background of din indicated that the men of Langley Crescent and Burgess Road were also heavily engaged.

I opened the bunker door and placed the candlestick on the top-most unit of a well-built stack of logs; then I grasped the hod by its remaining handle and its base—

which consists of sodden cardboard edged with zinc—and swung hard at the cobbles. The hod struck the back wall of the bunker and produced a shower of sparks. The momentary flash augmented the candle-light and revealed that the supply of cobbles was exhausted. I grabbed the chopper and began to attack one of three large lumps of coal.

Now it is not too difficult in daylight to strike a lump of coal in such a way that it fractures neatly with the cleat or grain; but this was not daylight. I rained short-arm blows upon the thing and it countered by spitting chips of fuel into my face.

I should explain perhaps that my position made it impossible to wield the chopper with major force: I stood astride the board (the slack-barrier fixed across the threshold) with my right foot inside the bunker and embedded in slack and my left foot and most of my back outside the bunker in the sleet. The stack of logs seriously reduced my elbow-room and cut the arc of my swing to eighteen inches at most.

I swung again and a piece of coal flew into my left eye. It was a substantial fragment, almost large enough to be handled by tongs, and it caused me considerable pain. In my anguish I dropped the chopper.

In falling the chopper struck a log and this log happened to be the keystone as it were of the entire stack. The carefully constructed edifice collapsed like a house of cards, dislodged the board and released the pent-up force of the mound of slack. The resultant roar of subsidence must have been audible over a wide area.

The back door opened.

"What's happened?" she said. "Are you all right?"

I did not answer.

"Where's the candle? What was that noise? Hurry up, the kitchen fire's nearly out."

I was too bruised in mind and body to find an effective reply. I lay there in the dark, the slack and the sleet with my knuckle pressed into my left eye.

"Very well," she said, "sulk if you want to." And she shut the door.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

BOOTS, BOOTS, BOOTS

THE HOTEL GUEST'S PRAYER

LET me give you a prefatory warning
About your procedure in the morning.
Whether it be wet or fine
I do not "rise and shine,"
Nor will I answer any pestilential blether
About the unsettled state of the weather.
I am not interested in where the hounds meet,
Nor in whether Lady de Trop has a good seat.
I do not care if this has been an exceptional season,
Let alone seek the reason.
As for your comments as a political wizard,
May they stick in your gizzard!
You will leave the windows shut and the curtains drawn
(I wish to observe neither the view nor the dawn),
And if you are wise you will enter in stockinged feet
(After a knock—audible, but discreet),
Then, low as though appointing a rendezvous for crime,
Whisper the time.

This is the sum and scope of all I ask;

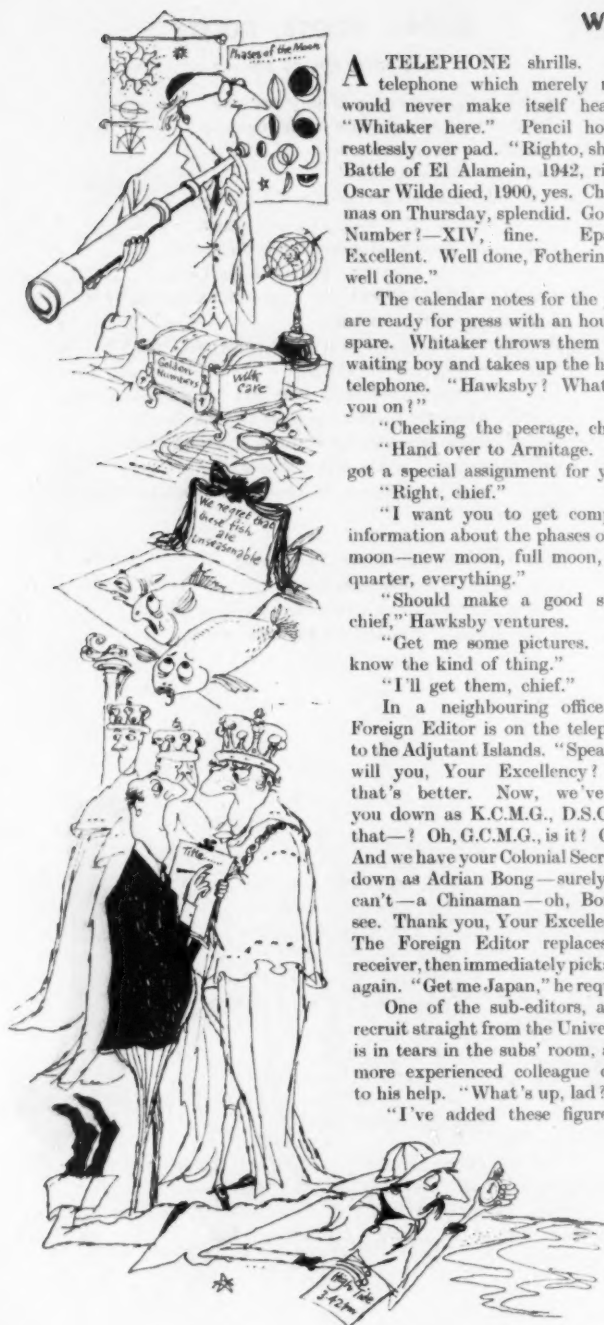
Not, surely, a complicated task?

Tell me: are such conditions ones you can fulfil?

If not—fetch a taxi and let me have my bill.



WHITAKER



A TELEPHONE shrills. (A telephone which merely rang would never make itself heard.) "Whitaker here." Pencil hovers restlessly over pad. "Righto, shoot. Battle of El Alamein, 1942, right. Oscar Wilde died, 1900, yes. Christmas on Thursday, splendid. Golden Number!—XIV, fine. Epect? Excellent. Well done, Fotheringay, well done."

The calendar notes for the year are ready for press with an hour to spare. Whitaker throws them to a waiting boy and takes up the house telephone. "Hawksby? What are you on?"

"Checking the peerage, chief."

"Hand over to Armitage. I've got a special assignment for you."

"Right, chief."

"I want you to get complete information about the phases of the moon—new moon, full moon, first quarter, everything."

"Should make a good story, chief," Hawksby ventures.

"Get me some pictures. You know the kind of thing."

"I'll get them, chief."

In a neighbouring office the Foreign Editor is on the telephone to the Adjutant Islands. "Speak up, will you, Your Excellency? Ah, that's better. Now, we've got you down as K.C.M.G., D.S.O.—is that—? Oh, G.C.M.G., is it? Good. And we have your Colonial Secretary down as Adrian Bong—surely that can't—a Chinaman—oh, Bond, I see. Thank you, Your Excellency." The Foreign Editor replaces the receiver, then immediately picks it up again. "Get me Japan," he requests.

One of the sub-editors, a new recruit straight from the University, is in tears in the subs' room, and a more experienced colleague comes to his help. "What's up, lad?"

"I've added these figures up

six times," the young sub gulps, "and they won't ever come to the same answer twice."

"Here, let me." The older man takes the galley-proof with gruff kindness. "Well, you are a juggins!" he exclaims after a swift glance. "They don't have to be added up; those are just the tables of average expectations of life."

Meanwhile the outside men are combing the world for information. Under Greenock Pier a man with a stop-watch records the time of high tide. In the House of Lords a representative goes busily from peer to peer, recording the surnames of those that differ from their titles. From Epsom comes, red-hot, the name of the Derby winner; from the Middle East first-hand news of the Moslem and Jewish Calendars; from the Vatican a stop-press list of patron saints; from Grimsby an up-to-date table of seasonable and unseasonable fish. Each item, as it enters the vast melting-pot of Whitaker House, is deftly sorted, flung into a pigeon-hole, snatched out again, condensed, translated, set up, cut down, until it finally appears in the familiar form so well known to all readers of *Whitaker's Almanack*.

Whitaker's Almanack began more modestly. The first editor was Joseph Whitaker, a journalist and man of letters, who founded *The Bookseller* and formerly edited *The Gentleman's Magazine*. On this last paper, under the name of Sylvanus Urban, he conducted the "Answers to Correspondents," an activity which necessitated his accumulating a vast store of assorted knowledge and scholarship; and in order to keep his wisdom easily accessible he compiled a "commonplace book." Unlike the commonplace books compiled by more commonplace people, however, this one was furnished with a comprehensive index.

Some years later the alarming rate at which his family was increasing (he had sixteen children altogether) prompted him to look around for a fresh source of revenue, and it occurred to him that his

commonplace book might be as useful to the public as it had been to himself. The first *Whitaker* accordingly appeared in December 1869, a volume of just under four hundred pages bearing a marked resemblance to the *Almanack* of to-day. Besides the information he already had stored he included a section of astronomical information supplied by the Royal Observatory. The book was a great success, and sold sixty thousand copies.

Since then there have been remarkably few changes in the layout of the *Almanack*, though of course a mass of additional information has been included, and the current edition is three times the size of its original progenitor. Minor alterations have been in the direction of austerity: the red-type "rubrics" of Number One were never repeated, and the practice of dubbing everyone "Esq." was soon discontinued—an economy well worth making, since the title occurred on the average twice in every line.

Joseph Whitaker died in 1895, and his place was taken by his son, who became Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Whitaker, and whose editorship continued for fifty-five years. When he took the job over he was still at Oxford; he died last year, in harness, and the post was assumed by two young men whom he had trained for the job—though Sir Cuthbert's son, Mr. Haddon Whitaker, is editor-in-chief and chairman of the company.

The remarkable thing is that these two joint editors are the entire editorial staff. They are responsible for obtaining all the information in the book, editing it, making up the pages, and compiling the index (which contains some thirty-five thousand entries.) They even address the envelopes containing the printed blanks on which the addressees inscribe the information about themselves which will later appear in the *Almanack*.

For it must be confessed that the world-wide network of intelligence described above is chimerical. True, the simple practice of asking for information from the people most likely to know has not always

worked; for instance, in the early days Mr. Joseph Whitaker had difficulty in getting Civil Servants to disclose the amounts of their salaries. He solved the problem by ascribing to them salaries which he thought fitting to their positions; needless to say, as soon as the figures were published the indignant Civil Servants, fearful for their social positions or for their income-tax returns, as the case might be, speedily supplied the correct amounts.

But for the most part the information is got from the department or individual responsible for it, though in addition there are a certain number of outside contributors who deal with such specialized subjects as astronomical data, banking and insurance, and who contribute the notes of the year on various artistic and other matters.

Members of the public are sometimes constructively critical of *Whitaker's* contents. Recently an amateur astrologer complained that no mention had been included of the newly-discovered, but unconfirmed, satellites of the planets Uranus and Neptune. "This," he grumbled, "has quite upset my astrological prognostications."

Whitaker has been known to turn an M.P. from a Tory into a Socialist; and it killed off an Empress of Japan before her time (and earned a protest from the Japanese Embassy). But such slips are rare; "the accuracy of the work depends on the zeal and assiduity of the editor and his staff," Sir Cuthbert Whitaker once said, and the *Whitaker* tradition calls for zeal and assiduity of a high order. Such accurate omniscience can be paralleled only in specialist publications like *Wisden: Whitaker's Almanack* has indeed been called the *Wisden* of general knowledge.

Wisden, one need hardly say, is a subsidiary of *Whitaker*.

B. A. YOUNG



AT THE PICTURES

Samson and Delilah—The Flame and the Arrow—Cinderella

THE sheer size of *Samson and Delilah* (Director: CECIL B. DEMILLE) seems to demand that it should be noticed; to ignore so enormous, over-coloured, over-stuffed, flamboyant an "epic" would be almost as absurd as taking it seriously. And one has to remember—it's a solemn thought—that there probably are quite a lot of people (mostly very young) who will take it seriously, and immense pains were taken so that they should. And yet to sit down and write a solemn, or at any rate a respectful, summing-up of opinion about such staggering nonsense in the same way as one would write about something with genuine pretensions to artistic value—the mere act of doing this is enough to make one feel ridiculous. It isn't enough to jeer at the thing as a monumental load of corn; it's tempting, but it isn't enough. Impossible to deny that tremendous skill has been used in every department; apart from the actors (and the thought of how these intelligent players must have felt while delivering these lines is a study in itself) and the roaring platoons of extras, apart from the elaborate planning, building and arrangement of such things as the final set-piece when (you've guessed

it) Samson brings down the temple by pushing down the pillars—apart from all this, remember the research, the determination that no jewel or design should be out of period even though the wearer might be saying something so comically out of key as to rouse a giggle at once. Unfortunately the average moment of this kind is not quotable; I doubt that any printed description can give you the irresistible effect of (for instance) an aside from one of the Lords of Gaza as they break up after a conference at which it has been decided that Delilah shall try to get from Samson the secret of his strength—the flatly dubious remark "I don't think she can do it." In a few more words, what would it be best to pick out for mention in this immense dressing-up (and filling-out) of the Biblical story, that resembles an uninterrupted series of pictures by Leighton or Matania? I'm inclined to concentrate on a small point and register discontent with the pattern of behaviour in a watching crowd, or the pattern of Mr. DEMILLE's display of it: always one gets a two-shot, a shot of two people talking, and one of them roars out some burly witticism about whatever they happen to be looking at, and the other one laughs. This isn't the sort of thing that enthral

me anyway, and a lot of it gets very troublesome indeed. Another point is that almost every two lines of dialogue are separated by a very far from electric pause. The film runs for two hours and eight minutes, and a little more briskness in conversation would have shortened it considerably. But no doubt the idea was that that would have made it undignified.

An even more thundering piece of Technicolor nonsense is *The Flame and the Arrow* (Director: JACQUES TOURNEUR), but this, I think, was mostly a deliberate lark—in spite of its solemn story about twelfth-century Italy, Ulrich of Hesse and his mercenaries in Lombardy, and all the rest of it. I must say I honestly enjoyed this, preposterous as it is. The hero is an energetic character known as Dardo the Arrow, who combines in the person of BURT LANCASTER all the least reposeful features of Robin Hood, William Tell and Tarzan of the Apes, and from the moment he bursts into the market square with the old twelfth-century greeting "Tell the boys I'll meetcha at the tavern" to the climax where he fells the villain with an arrow (*thunk!*) from the distant battlements there isn't a dull moment. As an aged

*Samson and Delilah*

Delilah—HEDY LAMARR

Samson—VICTOR MATURE

The Dominant Sex

Princess Anne—VIRGINIA MAYO

Dardo the Arrow—BURT LANCASTER

relative observes, he makes things happen (this by the way is an old boy who, after being rescued from the gallows where for a day or so he has been philosophically waiting to be hanged as a hostage, says plaintively "I'll be lucky if I come out of this without rheumatism"). The publicity insists that Mr. LANCASTER, "former circus star," really did all his stunts himself; on the least provocation he turns hand-springs, swings from chandeliers, swarms up ropes or poles, swoops round the skyline on improvised trapezes, throws massive minor villains about (taking careful aim), and generally behaves in a way that even Douglas Fairbanks might have thought a little over-dynamic. The men in his outlaw band, like Robin Hood's, are rather fatiguingly merry, but we don't see very much of them. I never found a Technicolor costume picture so entertaining—certainly not *Samson and Delilah*.

I believe I have had occasion before, in writing about Disneys, to mention those perishing blue birds and all that goes with them. I'm sure that there must be innumerable people who delight in these decorative but priggish twitterers and the other paraphernalia of calculated and self-conscious charm, and perhaps objecting to them makes me an old sourpuss, but I can't help it. Of course the full-length Disney cartoon *Cinderella* could not very well help being chock-full of such things; it is announced as "A Love Story With Music" and inevitably concentrates on Cinderella herself and her romance with the Prince, and the more obviously ornamental aspects of the well-loved narrative. Nevertheless the things in the piece that are enjoyable for people like me are, first, moments of pleasing design in certain scenes that flash by almost too quickly to be noticed, and second the comedy: not the "charming" comedy typified by the rosy-cheeked old gentleman giving a thunderous laugh, but the sub-acid, essentially disrespectful comedy of a yap-voiced mouse that seems to have modelled itself on Jimmy Durante. A house full of children was enjoying every moment



Hollywood

"My idea is to join the Communist Party, resign, and then write a best-seller on the theme of political disillusionment."

of it while I was there; but give me DISNEY when he's being funny without inhibition.

* * * * *

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

What else among the London shows in the first week of the new year? Well, there is a brilliantly enjoyable little French film, *Jofroi* (Director: RENÉ PAGNOL). This charming trifle is a short story about an old man who sells his orchard and then refuses to let the indignant buyer do what he wants with the trees—a crude statement which gives no real idea of the concentrated fun, character (the old man is admirably played by the composer VINCENT SCOTTO) and feeling for place in the film, which runs for

less than an hour and holds more honest pleasure than many things twice as long that cost forty times as much.

Releases include two that I have written about, though in not particularly laudatory terms, and two more that have points. As entertainment, *Harriet Craig* (22/11/50) is probably the most effective: the film is unimportant, but very competently done and full of satisfaction for anyone appreciative of skill. *The Elusive Pimpernel* (15/11/50) has some beautiful Technicolor and a great deal of corn. *Between Midnight and Dawn* is an efficient police ("prowl-car") thriller, and *September Affair* mixes its high-class-glamour plot with sight-seeing in Italy.

RICHARD MALLETT

SOMETHING FOR MRS. SPICER

WHEN I tell you that Mrs. Spicer has a china monkey ten inches high and dressed as a parlourmaid; a useful stuffed kitten carrying matches; and a big beige vase supported by two sick-looking gladiators wearing short mauve gym tunics, you will see how difficult it is to choose presents for her.

Father is all for administering a corrective gift in chaste taste, but mother is more humane.

"She wouldn't like it, dear," she says. "It's no use giving her something she wouldn't like."

Mrs. Spicer strokes her ornaments affectionately, and even gives a possessive little pat or two to her tea-cosy, which is studded with pink and black spangles. I saw real love looking out of her eyes last year when she unwrapped the pair of wooden shoes we gave her and found that there was salt in one and pepper

in the other; and she cried when father's overcoat swept down to hopeless destruction her jam dish with the outside porcelain wasps squatting on its edge. Father was sorry and wanted to get Mrs. Spicer another dish like it, but she said with perfect truth that she didn't think he could.

About four of her belongings play tunes when least expected to; one of her little pitchers literally has long ears; and it goes without saying that when you go there for tea you can pick up a foolish-looking cow and pour milk out of its mouth.

"Isn't it *perfect*?" demands Mrs. Spicer. Her shining faith even shames father into silence, although he shied when she wanted him to hang up his hat on a pair of antlers she had recently gilded.

As Christmas approaches we all start looking for something for Mrs. Spicer. My young sister enters into the hunt in a spirit of mischief, proposing gifts quite impossible in

price and for other reasons; and this year she was rash enough to buy one and bring it home just on the chance.

Father closed his eyes when he'd seen it. Mother said firmly "That's going too far. She'd think we were making fun of her."

Both fascinated and revolted, I edged up to the object. The china Miss Muffet and her tuffet were in the minority; it was the big spider that really made the impression. It had, among other features, heavy ginger eyebrows and an unpleasant little pursed-up mouth.

"See—you can put mustard in the spider," explained my sister proudly, lifting its terrible head off. "Don't those hairs on its legs look real, mother?"

After she'd been made to take the thing back my sister washed her hands of the whole affair; we could, she suggested crossly, get on with it by ourselves.

Father bought a thin, chilly etching for Mrs. Spicer, but was shouted down, so gave it to his brother; mother alternately dallied with and retreated from an egg-timer that played "Annie Laurie," until it was snapped up by someone else; and I found a nice sentimental painting in the Portobello Road.

"It's called 'Dreaming,'" I said.

"It certainly ought to be," agreed father coldly, still a little annoyed about the rejected etching.

My gift won. It wasn't quite brightly enough coloured, but time was short and it would have to do.

"I only hope she'll like it," said mother. "Let's all take it to her this evening."

We were just putting our coats on when someone rang the doorbell. It was Mrs. Spicer herself, all smiles and breathlessness.

"But I've brought you a present," she said. So amid suitable merriment we decided on a double opening ceremony.

"What I always say," called Mrs. Spicer, with a hint of wistfulness in her voice, above the double rustle of the unveiling, "is that you should give something you'd adore to keep for yourself."

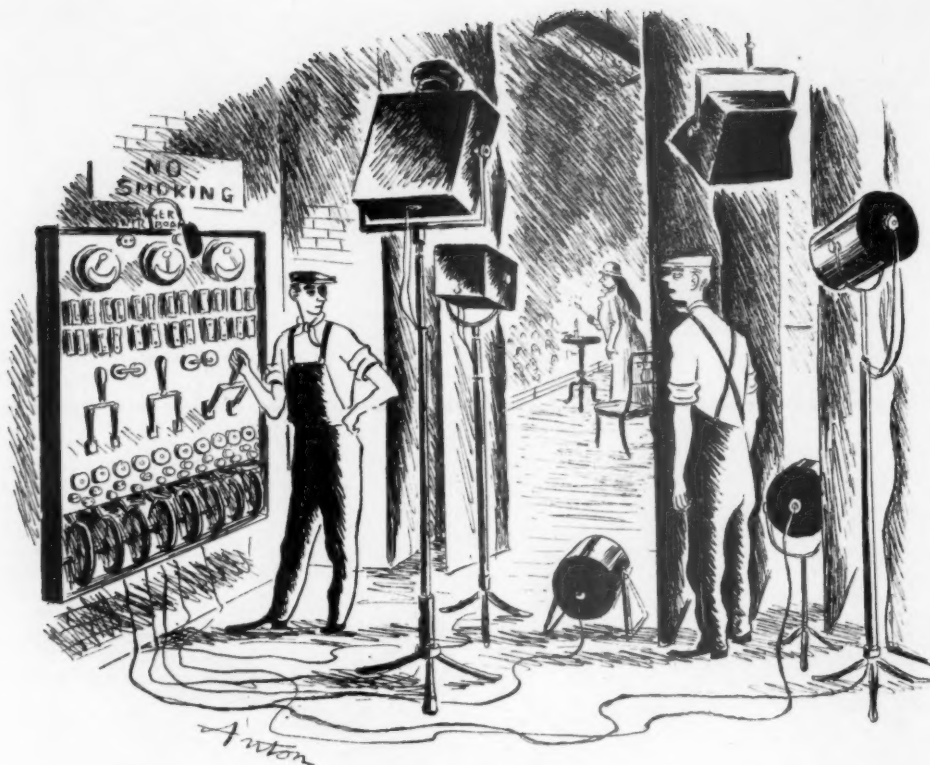
Some premonition of doom told me what it was even before we had uncovered its ginger eyebrows.



"I'm sorry, but he's at lunch."



"Please, may we have our ball back?"



"O.K., Joe—she's just going to light the candle now."

JACKET MESS

"ON Thursday, when we last wore mess undress uniform," said Mooney, "we played skittles in the bowling alley of the Mess, recapturing our youth, all twelve of us. For this purpose we removed our mess jackets, arranging them in a neat heap on a bench in the alley."

"That is so," said Purbright.

"We were of the same rank and branch of the Navy, and our mess jackets bore the same lace and distinction cloth."

"Just so," said Purbright.

"In fact the only method of distinguishing between one mess jacket and another was by examination of miniature medal ribbons."

"No," said Purbright, keenly, his hand going to the inside pocket of his mess jacket. "There is the name inside."

"You are not quite right," said Mooney. "I have

had occasion to give the matter thought. Officers' mess jackets are seldom marked with the names of their owners. Mine, for example, belonged to my wife's godfather and contains the name 'P. Smith,' and the date 'December 1912.'"

Purbright's hand came away again. "I see," he said.

"But the mess jacket that I'm wearing," said Mooney, "has the name 'L. T. Ripple' inside, and the date 'January 1940.' It has the feel of a mess jacket made in a hurry for a thin officer."

"That sounds like Cranmer. He was playing skittles on Thursday. He might have picked yours up."

"My name in vain?" asked a thin officer, peering down at Purbright and Mooney in their armchairs.

"Your mess jacket seems a little loose on you this evening," said Purbright.

"Funny you should say that," said Cranmer. "It

has changed in some way since last Thursday, or else I've shrunk."

"What makes you think you earned the Burma Star during the recent war?" asked Mooney.

"I didn't," said Cranmer. "Why do you ask?"

"You've got it on," said Mooney. Cranmer looked at his chest. "These aren't mine at all," he said. "Someone must have switched ribbon-brooches with me." He gazed lugubriously at Purbright. "Unpinned my brooch and pinned on another. A gun-room trick; almost a jape."

"What decorations do you own?" asked Mooney.

"1939-1945 Star; Atlantic, Africa and Pacific Stars; Defence and Victory Medals," said Cranmer, after a little thought. "I've travelled a good deal, you know; you should see the labels on my suitcase."

Mooney pointed to the brooch on the mess jacket he was wearing himself. "How would these do?" he asked.

Cranmer polished his spectacles, replaced them and looked. "That's a very curious coincidence," he said. "We must have covered the same ground. We might discuss our exploits over a bottle one evening. Unfortunately this evening I—"

"You don't think," suggested Mooney, "that perhaps I'm wearing your mess jacket and ribbons?"

"Dear me, no," said Cranmer. "I know you too well, Mooney. You would not do a thing of that sort."

"You don't think," suggested Mooney, "that perhaps you are wearing my mess jacket and ribbons?"

Cranmer sat down in a third armchair. "That would be unlike me," he said. "I have a strong sense of *meum* and *tuum*."

"I did not mean that you would do it deliberately," said Mooney.

"You mean that I might have done it accidentally?"

"Yes," said Mooney.

"How?"

"In the skittle alley last Thursday."

"That was a guest night, was it not?"

"Yes," said Mooney.

"Well, then, old man, it's a probability," said Cranmer, who was at last allowing his mind to work. "This stirring collection of ribbon on my breast, could it be yours?"

"It could, exactly," said Mooney.

"It could be mine too," said Purbright.

"Don't obscure the issue, Purbright," said Mooney.

"Cranmer, what name should there be inside your mess jacket?"

Cranmer plunged deep into thought. "'L. T. Ripple, January 1940,'" he said at last. "Not Pelmanism; just a knack I have," he added.

Mooney and Cranmer rose to their feet and began to take off their mess jackets. An admiral, passing through the ante-room, paused at Purbright's chair and leaned over him, his eyes alight. "Don't get up," he said softly. "But if either of them wants a second, let me know. Nothing I enjoy better than a good set-to." "Aye, aye, sir," said Purbright. The admiral passed on.

Cranmer, comfortably inside his own mess jacket, smiled at the other two. "Well, then, thank you very much," he said, and followed the admiral out of the room.

Purbright examined Mooney. "Your mess jacket is not a very good fit, if I may say so," he said.

"After all," replied Mooney, "it was made in 1912, only a century after the retreat from Moscow; you can't expect too much of it." He wriggled his shoulders, and doubt appeared on his face. "You really think it doesn't look right?"

"It's not quite you," said Purbright. "Why don't you have a look at the name-tab?" Mooney stared at him. His hand went to his inside pocket and he began to twist the name-tab outwards. He stopped suddenly. "Purbright," he said, "just now you said yourself that your ribbons were the same as mine."

Purbright protested. "I was only shoving my oar into troubled waters," he said.

"All the same," said Mooney, "you might have a look at your name-tab."

They both looked. Mooney spoke first. "'P. Purbright, September 1933,'" he said. "'P. Smith,'" said Purbright. "'December 1912.'" He blushed.

The two officers stood up and began to remove their mess jackets. The admiral, returning through the mess, caught sight of them and paused wistfully for a moment before passing on. "There seems," he was later heard to tell the commander, "to be a fine spirit amongst your officers."



"You were top in French, Shirley. Let's hear you ask him whether he's all right."

FAN MAIL

AS soon as I had read that Maheen Degreete was "a tremendous fan of U-Boil-O" I sat down and wrote to the manufacturers, Messrs. Grudge Brothers.

"I have just seen your advertisement in the *Daily Gazette* and feel sure you would like to know that I, too, am a tremendous fan both of U-Boil-O and of Miss Maheen Degreete. But surely I am not unique! There must be thousands and thousands like me all over the country. Can nothing be done for us?"

They replied:

"We are most grateful for your letter. We agree with you when you declare that U-Boil-O's fans are legion. We are, therefore, particularly interested in your concluding sentence and would be obliged if you would kindly amplify what you have in mind. We enclose a stamped addressed envelope for this purpose."

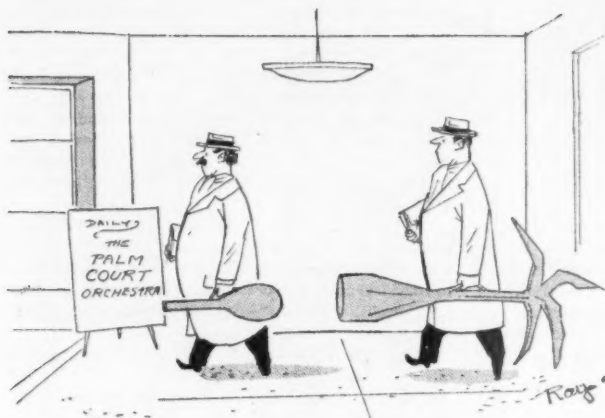
My answer was:

"I visualize the formation of U-Boil-O Fan Clubs. In this way we could give the fullest expression to our gratitude and admiration for U-Boil-O and, at the same time, engage in useful and cultural pursuits such as quizzes, discussions, brains trusts and so on. I can see us starting in quite a small way on a purely local basis; then, as the movement grew, area organizers could be appointed, and—who knows?—we might one day have a National Rally at the Albert Hall."

They wrote back at once:

"Our Board of Directors have given your excellent suggestion the fullest consideration, and you will be glad to know that their approval is unqualified. They now look forward to the early establishment of the U-Boil-O Fan Club No. 1 in your own district. Naturally we shall be only too glad to give you every possible assistance in the task of preliminary organization, and if you will kindly specify your requirements you may rest assured that they will receive our most immediate attention."

I replied:



RETROSPECT

"THIS is Sheila. That's the costume I was knitting at the concert.

Three ply. You remember—Hilda's pattern. These are just rocks and cliffs and boats—Scenery.

Now look at this of dad,
Easy to tell *he's* on holiday.
Really!

That's Alice. Yes, she *does* go brown.
It's her skin. I never do.

Just red; then peel.
Derek took two on this one.

Pity.

You can just see baby
There, look, underneath the jetty.

No, dad! Don't pass that round!
No!

Well, anyway I'm not as fat as that *awful* person
From the bungalow.

How she *could*!—and in a bright green two-piece too. Coo!

Now *this* is clever. You can see dad holding the string—
Wedge the camera with a rock, he did.

If it hadn't moved it would
Have been ever so

Good.

Just look at my feet! Of course

**They're out of focus—
Sauce!**

Yes--aren't they? and it's only a cheap little box affair.

Dad got at Felixstowe before
The war."

"I take it that our first need will be a meeting place, and I think our village hall would be the most suitable. Secondly we shall require a U-Boil-O banner for hanging across the back of the platform, and we could have some twenty or thirty smaller placards, bearing the name of your product, stuck on the walls and suspended by threads from the ceiling. For variation, no doubt you could supply pictures of your Board of Directors.

"As for the meeting itself, it would indeed be a great honour if Miss Maheen Degreete could be persuaded to take the chair until our own branch officers have been elected. We could then proceed to a quiz with useful and interesting questions like 'What is U-Boil-O?' 'Who makes it?' 'What is it used for?' 'Who are the Board of Directors?' and so on. Afterwards we could have cultural competitions, and perhaps you yourselves would

be willing to award a small prize for the best one-minute speech on 'Why I like U-Boil-O.' Finally we could end with some sort of song or rallying-cry like 'One, two, three, four, We all go for—U-Boil-O! . . . ' or words to that effect."

Next day I received a reply-paid telegram. It read:

"ARRIVING TOMORROW MIDDAY WITH THREE ASSISTANTS ORGANIZE ENROLMENT U-BOIL-ONIANS KINDLY ARRANGE ACCOMMODATION GRUDGE MANAGING DIRECTOR."

I wired back:

"ACCOMMODATION ARRANGED WELCOME YOUR VISIT."

This morning, however, I received two grievous set-backs. First there arrived another telegram from Messrs. Grudge Brothers to intimate, regretfully, that "other engagements" prevented Miss Maheen Degreete from attending the proposed meeting.

This was too much. I at once wound up the affairs of the U-Boil-O Fan Club No. 1.

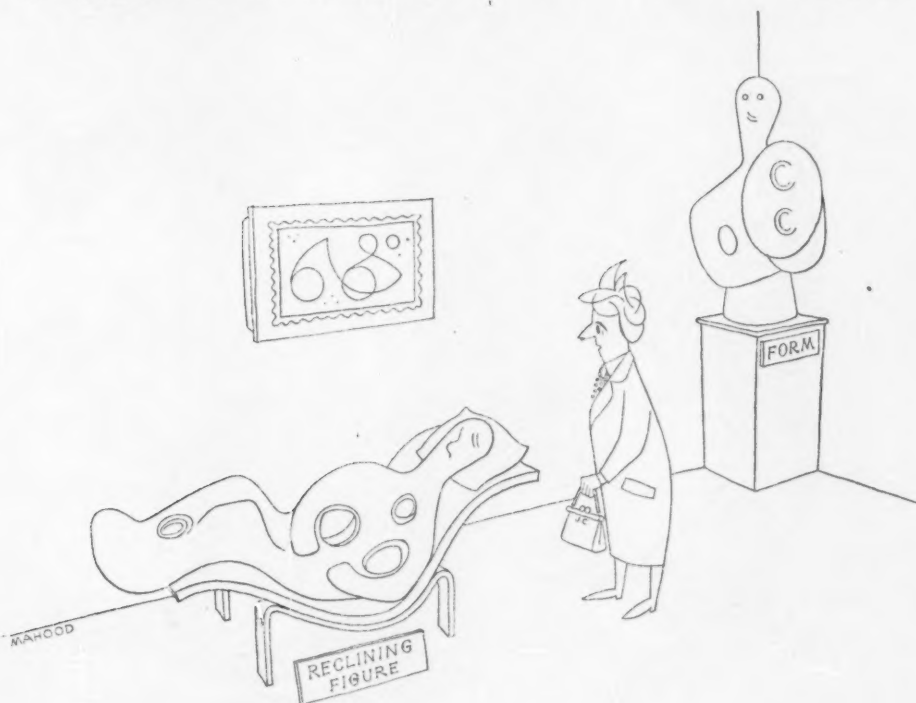
The second shock was caused by the bottom left-hand corner of page 3 of my *Daily Gazette*. And as soon as I had read that Maheen Degreete "regularly washes her woollies in Whizzo" I sat down and wrote to the manufacturers, Messrs. Ingleswill. . . .

2 2

THOUGHTS IN THE NEW YEAR

THE first half of the century
For fifty years it ran,
But nobody can quite agree
In which year it began.
Whether too early or too late,
The difficulty's not
Entirely when to celebrate,
Nor even how, but what.

MARK HOLLIS





FIRELIGHT

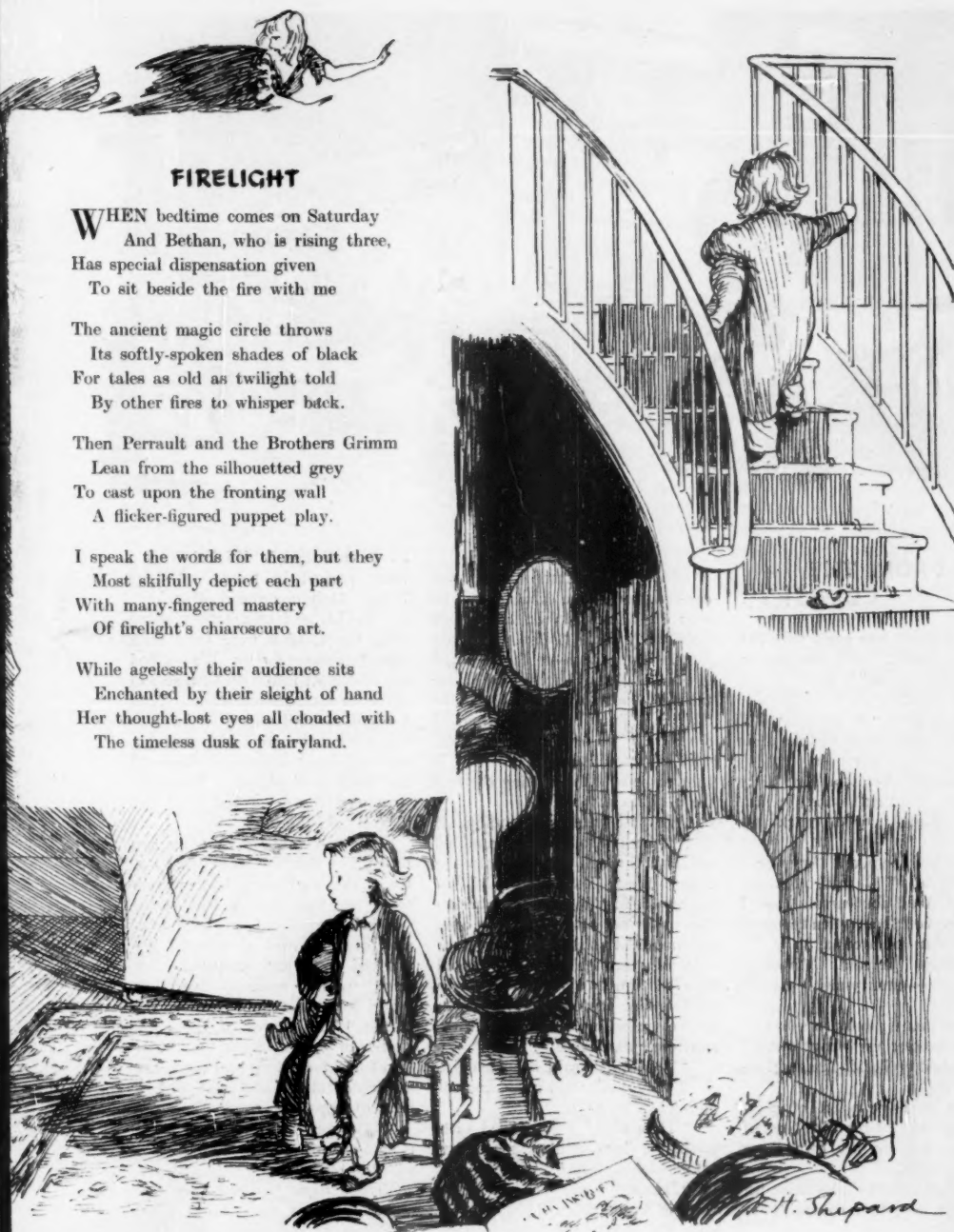
WHEN bedtime comes on Saturday
And Bethan, who is rising three,
Has special dispensation given
To sit beside the fire with me

The ancient magic circle throws
Its softly-spoken shades of black
For tales as old as twilight told
By other fires to whisper back.

Then Perrault and the Brothers Grimm
Lean from the silhouetted grey
To cast upon the fronting wall
A flicker-figured puppet play.

I speak the words for them, but they
Most skilfully depict each part
With many-fingered mastery
Of firelight's chiaroscuro art.

While agelessly their audience sits
Enchanted by their sleight of hand
Her thought-lost eyes all clouded with
The timeless dusk of fairyland.





UP FROM THE COUNTRY

"WHY don't you come with me, one night?" said the grower.

"I don't know," I said.

So I went.

"What have we got aboard?"

I inquired, when he picked me up in his lorry outside my gate.

"Bunched carrots. They'll be the only bunched ones in the Garden to-night, you mark my words."

(I marked them, and they were.)

"That all?" I said. At one time I was all for carrots, but I rather went off them when the facts about Radar got around.

"Sprouts," he said. "Twenty-seven boxes—twenty-eight pounds to a box."

"How many plants to a box?"

"Let me see. Oh, about seven."

I climbed up beside him, and we drove off.

"Nice to have a bit of company," he said. "I get a bit tired of doing this trip on my own three nights a week."

"Is it cheaper to take them up in your own lorry than to send them by rail?"

"It is now."

We were in Hampshire, it was seven-fifteen in the evening, and he said he wanted to be at Covent Garden by ten. As we were only just in Hampshire—in fact we had got into Surrey while we were talking—we had plenty of time to stop at a pub for a few games of darts. He whitewashed me twice, with consummate ease. There is that to be said for making the trip three times a week.

We rattled through Sunningdale and Egham into Staines, rumbled sedately through Ashford into the Great West Road—we had an uneasy feeling there was a porpoise-like police-car astern, and we were covenanted to thirty miles an hour—jolted through Brentford, and crawled humbly along Piccadilly to the Garden. It was twenty past ten as we pulled up outside a dead, shuttered warehouse.

"Too late!" I said, despairingly.

"They don't start unloading till midnight," he said.

"Then why," I demanded with justifiable heat, "drag me away before closing-time?"

"Because I want to get away again in decent time. The later you come the longer you have to wait

to be unloaded." He indicated a lorry parked in front. "We're lucky. Only one ahead of us."

The kerbs of the streets radiating from the Garden were lined with silently waiting lorries. We jumped out and went into a dive-ish sort of place for sausages-and-chips. Then we had a drink and went back to the lorry. We got inside the cab, turned up our overcoat collars and lay back and dozed. The rain drummed down on the roof and glittered off the road.

We were aroused by a rasping roar. The shutters were being run back, the warehouse was opening up. A yawning, tousle-headed youth emerged and sprinkled sawdust over the wet pavement. We climbed down and stretched. We found we had seniority over four more lorries, tailing round the corner. The driver of the lorry ahead of us, a squat, muscular Londoner, looked up and down the unpeopled street and spat with a kind of impatient resignation.

"The day them outside porters is here on time," he muttered, "I'll sign the pledge."

Three more yawning men appeared. These were inside men, employed by our wholesaler. One

took a broom and swept out the premises, raising a fine mound of derelict fruit and vegetables. The others lined up on the threshold and stared across the pavement at us. We leaned on the lorry and stared back. Until the outside porters arrived it was stalemate.

"What would happen," I asked the grower, "if we unloaded your stuff ourselves?"

He went deathly pale.

"England would be without fresh vegetables for six months."

"Would it be such an unpopular move as that?"

"Listen. I take the stuff off the lorry and pass it to the outside porter. The outside porter carries it across the pavement and hands it over to the inside staff. It is then all theirs. The fact that I could chuck my stuff from the lorry over the pavement and into the shop is beside the point. I am compelled to employ the link."

"Even when it's a missing link?"

"Yes."

"Are you serious about there being a strike if you got tired of waiting and did the job yourself?"

"Well, fairly. It's definitely advisable to wait. Anyhow, they get paid for every single lorry that comes into the Garden whether they've unloaded it or not. So, what with one thing and another, one just waits."

The inside staff filled in time making ready for the buyers. They opened boxes of pears and tomatoes, dived their hands into barrels as though they were bran-tubs, fetching out bunches of green grapes and blowing the granulated cork off them.

"What time do the buyers start coming?" I asked a man emptying a sack of carrots into a crate.

"Half-past five. Half an hour later in most other places."

"Do you stop buying yourselves then?"

"Bless you, no. The lorries 'll be delivering stuff till ten in the morning."

He sorted carefully through the crate of carrots, putting aside some two dozen of the finest. He emptied the rest back into the sack, rolled

down the top, and dressed it appetizingly with the hand-picked carrots. Then he started on a sack of onions.

At half-past twelve an outside—and outsize—porter arrived, a great, beefy fellow who hefted the sacks of swedes from the lorry ahead as though they were sacks of feathers.

"Makes fifteen to twenty pounds a week," whispered the grower.

I instantly resolved to scratch my son from the school he was down for and enter him for Covent Garden instead.

The Garden was now wide awake. Lights blazed, engines throbbed, lorries rumbled through the narrow streets, snorting, reversing, swearing. A lorry, trying to pass between two others parked abreast, one each side of the road, failed, and a cataract of onions poured and bounced from a ripped sack. The lorry, backing and filling, passed over them, and we all gathered around and wept over them. The odour from a sackful of crushed onions is almost vocal.

At last it was our turn, and we clambered up on to our cargo. The grower straddled the carrots. I stood on the sprouts. We handed the boxes down to the porter, who received them into the sort of truck that (now I come to think of it) I haven't seen on a railway station for twenty years. For the last load, three cases of sprouts, he disdained the truck, and did it on his head. He had a thing like a rubber deck-tennis quoit inside the crown of his cap, but I should judge some of the weight must have got down to his neck as well.

One in the morning. The rain still coming down. The gutters and roadways carpeted with fresh vegetables. I don't know why anybody living in W.C.2 ever buys vegetables. All they have to do is to take a basket for a walk after midnight.

"Now for the empties," said the grower as we put up the side board.

We drove round a couple of dark blustery corners, pulling up at a blacked-out warehouse in a forlorn little street. The iron gates to the yard were padlocked, and the

grower said dash and bother it (or words to rather more than that effect), the old blank was out taking a stroll around the market as usual. We waited a dismal half-hour, and then the old blank, small and wizened, came pattering and snuffling through the lamp-lit rain. The old blank, the custodian of the empties to be brought back filled with produce next trip, grunted, which seemed to be his idea of "Good evening," and unlocked the gates. Within towered, half as high as the surrounding houses, monumental stacks of boxes (four bob on each). I thought what the Crazy Gang could have done there.

"I'm taking fifty-one, that's all," said the grower.

The old blank grunted.

We located three barrows, picked out one with rubber tyres—only rubber-shod barrows allowed here at night—and piled the boxes into it. Up went a neighbouring window, with an angry rush.

"Hoy!" called a feminine voice, as Juliet might have called.

"Hoy!" returned the grower courteously.

"Turn it up, will ya?"

"Turn what up?"

"Cut out that row, or I'll call the cops."

"Madam," explained the grower "we're loading up."

"Then you stop loading up!" advised the invisible lady.

"That," said the grower, "would be an impossible way to run a business."

There was silence, possibly while the cops were contacted. We got our empties aboard. We exchanged farewell grunts with the old blank. It was ten-to-two as we drove off, took an arc of Piccadilly Circus, and set course for home.

"You'll be in bed quite early," said the grower cheerily, as he dropped me at my gate at half-past three.

"I shall be."

I agreed, rubbing bleary eyes; "for the next week."

COLIN HOWARD.





"But you must admit it was a neat bit of parking."

ONCE UPON A TIME

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT

AN AFREET. I will wander through the courts and markets of this fair city and Do Good. Lo, an aged apple-woman, the mediocrity of whose wares invites alms. Greetings, Goody, I give thee three wishes.

APPLE-WOMAN. Thankee kindly. Pray accept three in return. I am an emissary of Frigga, and it is my duty to distribute the charity of the Norse gods on earth.

AFREET. Here is one approaching whom the gods might well love, to judge by his open countenance, his gay coat and the indescribable brilliance of his brow. I will give him of my bounty.

APPLE-WOMAN. Hey, I saw him first.

AFREET. 'Twas I that sensed him about to wend his way hitherwards. Admire how I answer the primitive bluntness of the north with the grammatical subtlety of the south.

SHEPHERD. Ho, ho! Know that ye stand in the dread presence of Apollo, who passeth a sabbatical year tending-sheep.

AFREET. I might have guessed it. That frank laugh hath in it somewhat of the condescension of a god towards spirits of lesser rank.

APPLE-WOMAN. I do not think I much care for Apollo. His person is impregnable but his earthly gear is vulnerable enow. *(She summons vultures to havoc the flock.)*

AFREET. This easy assumption of *jeunesse dorée* misliketh me. *(He makes the Shepherd's crook red-hot.)*

APOLLO. Terrible is my rage, O light-minded ones. Hark to the judgment Phœbus hath prepared for ye and quake in thy leathern shoon. . . .

(The AFREET and the APPLE-WOMAN leave precipitately to report.)

Enter the CALIPH, loosely disguised as a robber.

CALIPH. Lo, a disconsolate shepherd. I will cheer him as if an equal. What's the beef, chum?

APOLLO. Mortal, veil your eyes from the lightnings of my gaze.

CALIPH. My subjects are usually prompt to penetrate my disguise and become abashed at my condescension.

EXECUTIONER. Boy, give me my steel; I must hone my blade.

VIZIER. Not daring to counsel caution, I counsel daring. *(From beneath a nearby wine-cart runs a DEVILKIN, with a LEPRECHAUN in pursuit.)*

APOLLO. Help! What is it? (*Since nothing so upsets the divine as the unexpected, he leaps on to a bench among several trussed fowl.*)

DEVILKIN. Although inured to being ploughed by careless peasants as they till the rich black earth of Mother Russia, I feel at a disadvantage with this wild Hibernian.

LEPRECHAUN. Begorrah, is it afraid ye are of a little old wizened hoppity man like meself? (*As the DEVILKIN takes refuge on APOLLO's shoulder a PHILOSOPHER enters.*)

PHILOSOPHER. Naught is that which it doth have semblance of. Thy fears are but chaff before the Absolute.

CALIPH. Well reasoned, wiseacre. I am glad we are to have some intellectual conversation.

APOLLO. Although somewhat at a loss with strange fauna, I am used to dealing with Philosophers. (*Turns him into a fig-tree.*)

DEVILKIN. Figs, oh, goody!

LEPRECHAUN. Got ye!

CALIPH. This is a wonder well pleasing to my jaded pleasure-palate. Pray accompany me to the city gaol and there perform further merry feats upon the captives.

APOLLO. I have no intention of tarrying where mortals have seen me at less than my golden best. I shall return to Olympus as swift as a tufted arrow.

(*Exit, as if tufted.*)

The scene changes to the Conference Hall of the Gods.

ZEUS. Welcome, cousins.

ODIN. It is my place to take the Chair and welcome you. (*They hurl thunderbolts, which fail to dent each other's immortality.*)

APOLLO. Please stop squabbling and get down to business. The dreadful insults I endured must be avenged at once. That is the really important item on the agenda.

AFREET. It scarcely comes on the agenda at all. It's "Any other business." We are here to deal with the encroachment of foreigners in my territory. Offering me three wishes in Baghdad!

FRIGGA. Darest thou to spurn my gifts? The whole world is subject to my benevolence.

APOLLO. Stop arguing and do something. I tell you, this Caliph person treated me as if I were no more than a shepherd with a knack for transmutation.

AFREET. In the courts of my home there is red anger, and even Djinn's long embottled by Solomon beat furiously upon the walls of their long-necked tombs.

CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN. I have had an idea, the which has not happened before for a thousand years and one. While the gods dwell in their heavens all, as Browning will point out, is right with the world. It is this dwelling among men which causes havoc. Let us therefore agree to eschew this passion for residence among our creatures on earth.

OMNES. Alas! Thou art right enough. Alack!

APOLLO. It is the only way to avoid this tendency to overlap; but what will Admetus do for shepherds?

AFREET. Fishermen must prosper now by skill in fishing. However, rationalization has raised its bleak head and we must submit.

ZEUS. If any grow bored with Valhalla, a warm welcome awaits them on Olympus.

ODIN. We reciprocate, oh, how we reciprocate.

APOLLO. Would you like a tune?

OMNES. Heaven forbids!

FINIS

R. G. G. PRICE

BACK ROOM JOYS

THE RETORT PERFECT

A RARE, twice-in-a-lifetime form of sport Is the finally annihilating retort. The sort of thing I have in mind Is devastating but never at all unkind. And—which should be abundantly made clear— It must be audible *and* now *and* here, Not muttered to-morrow morning, to ourselves, in the train—

We can all do that.

No: there must be that glorious dawn in the brain, Then out it comes, perfect-born, pat, Clear-spoken, deliberate, cool And—this is the test—so remote from all human reply That it wouldn't occur to our opposite number to try. He mustn't be made to look a fool Or he won't go about and repeat it; He should just grin and beat it, Leaving us amazed at our inspiration, Saying it over and over again for sweet confirmation, And rehearsing the tactics of its infiltration Into all future conversation.

JUSTIN RICHARDSON





Sharing the Stocks

Adam Overdo—MR. ROGER LIVESEY; Humphrey Waspe—MR. ALEC CLUNES
Zoeal-of-the-land Busy—MR. MARK DIGNAM

[Bartholomew Fair]

AT THE PLAY

Bartholomew Fair (OLD VIC)—Goody Two Shoes (LONDON CASINO)
Babes in the Wood (PALLADIUM)

ENGLAND must have been out of her senses in 1855 when she abolished as a nuisance the great fair that was London's pride for over seven hundred years. We may never see the like again for wealth of English types, but at the Old Vic until January 13 you can delight in BEN JONSON's first-hand impression of its milling humanity. At the Edinburgh Festival last summer *Bartholomew Fair* was given on an open stage flanked by long rows of booths, which proved very distracting, for there is so little plot, so much loose anecdote, that dissipation is the last thing the play needs. Indeed, it has plenty of that already, being a thorough-going anatomy of the frailties and vices, the cozenings and conceits that colour a patchwork mob on holiday.

Now, within the framework of the Vic, Mr. GEORGE DEVINE's production gains immensely. The booths are arranged in depth, and can be turned round to suggest the size of the fair, while the picturesque jam of gaudy merchandise to which

MOTLEY introduces us seems made for the smooth absorption of defaulting tricksters.

Don't expect to find any of the structural engineering recommended by the correspondence schools of dramatic art. This is a charade of character rather than a play; but anyone who likes caricature will be fascinated by the skill with which JONSON pins down his specimens. An extremely able cast enters into his bawdy but perceptive humours with rare spirit. Mr. ROGER LIVESEY has never been funnier than as Adam Overdo, snooping in disguise for "enarmities" and being confounded by the scandalous delinquency of his own wife. As *Bartholomew*, the rich young zany afflutter to taste innocent joys—and marked down from the start as Public Sucker No. 1—Mr. ROBERT EDDISON gives a deliciously idiotic performance. Mr. ALEC CLUNES, remodelling his face to take it at least into cousinship with that of Miss Margaret Rutherford, exults in the bearish manners masking the sterling heart of *Bartholomew's*

steward *Humphrey*. Those who would have stood by the Stuarts, for all their hopelessness, cannot but find the keenest pleasure in Mr. MARK DIGNAM's portrait of that gross hypocrite, *Zeal-of-the-land Busy*; and Miss URSULA JEANS, Miss NUNA DAVEY, Mr. PAUL ROGERS, and Mr. ANTHONY VAN BRIDGE and many others add much to this hurly-burly evening. The puppet show is conducted by Mr. GEORGE SPEAIGHT in a manner perfectly satisfactory to Mr. Punch himself. For my taste there is a superfluity throughout the production of false noses, which in quantity have a way of cancelling out, but for breathing such gusty life into so disjointed a piece Mr. DEVINE deserves warm praise.

I don't believe there is a shred of evidence that the shoe in which the old lady suffered such notorious overcrowding was situated in Scotland, but history is on a poor wicket at this time of year, and into *Goody Two Shoes* Mr. EMILE LITTLER slips what may well be the mock-up for the Festival of Kirkcudbright. The clans gather as threateningly as ever they did for the Massacre of Brigadoon, and, adding to their well-known native noises a promising song called "Annie Laurie," have as background a tremendous Highland waterfall which must tax severely all the wettest resources of the Metropolitan Water Board. You can almost see the salmon leaping



[Goody Two Shoes]

Getting the Laughs

Martha—MR. ARTHUR ASKEY

from tin to tin. This pantomime is much enlivened by ARTHUR ASKEY and CHARLIE CAIROLI, but would have been more so if the first had had better jokes and the second a greater chance to display his astonishing command of the most recalcitrant wind instruments. The ancient scene in which rebellious recruits fling their rifles about has surely earned a rest. Nevertheless ASKEY does wonders, and CAIROLI puts us further in his debt by extracting powerful melody from the end of a rubber hose. YVONNE MARSH and JOY HAYDEN deal briskly with romance, the TILLER GIRLS and the TERRY CHILDREN trip it gaily, and DARLY'S DOGS act a complete village drama by themselves, visiting the pub, buying hats, and being dragged off to prison for misconduct. They do it all so naturally that one is soon tricked into believing that dogs make up the world.

Babes in the Wood made me wonder, not for the first time, why children, for whom pantomimes are supposedly written, should be subjected annually to amorous twaddle and to the kind of jest specially constructed for fat men with cigars. Parts of this show suffer sadly from these phenomena, but elsewhere it has plenty of the right stuff. SONNIE HALE is the *Nannie*, full-rigged, short-sighted, flirtatious, and sweeps through the evening outrageously. For *Robbers* we have those two doughty comics, JIMMY JEWEL and BEN WARRISS, who must be among the most unreliable murderers in the long history of pantomime infanticide. They do very well, and ROY ROYSTON as the *Page* abets them nimbly. ADELE DIXON makes a gallant *Robin Hood*, CAROLE LYNNE a charming *Maid Marion*. There is good dancing, and a notable haunted room. A

generous list of bonus plums includes SEVEN ASHTONS, aerial tumblers of outstanding brilliance; EVIE SLACK, who ties the most graceful grannies in herself, reminding me a little of Tilly Losch; and a venerable Model T Ford which JEWEL and WARRISS put through the stopping and starting antics Cavallini has made familiar in the circus. They add one excellent embellishment by removing the steering wheel and letting the car circle the stage by itself, a menace which the orchestra faces with becoming manliness.

Recommended

Anouilh's *Point of Departure* has just arrived at the Duke of York's; the best play in London, and beautifully acted. Safe for laughter is *Seagulls over Sorrento* (Apollo), and all ages should like *Lace on Her Petticoat* (Ambassadors).

ERIC KEOWN

THE CALL-BOX

BECAUSE you were beautiful and seemed to expect it
I let you have the call-box though I was there before.

Privileged by gallantry, I stood there and watched you,
Drinking in the glamour through the dim glass door.

You shook from your hand-bag a sheaf of
correspondence,
Hairpins, and handkerchiefs, and oddities unknown,
A flapjack, a ration-book and several kinds of
lipstick,
And last of all a little purse of pennies for the phone.

Long white fingers stabbing at the numbers
Poised impatient at the dial's loud delay:
Exquisite anxiety and sweet anticipation
Melted into triumph as you pressed Button A.

Eager and earnest, coral-lipped and voluble,
Toying with a stray curl, tapping with your feet,
You talked incessantly: and I stood and watched you,
And heard no sound but the thunder of the street.

Turning to the dark skies and back to the call-box,
I stood transfixed on finding you to be
Shaken with a soundless ecstasy of laughter,
Wildly inexplicable but wonderful to see.

Sobriety returned to you for no known reason,
Reality to me because it started to rain:

And as far as I could gather you declaimed Gray's *Elegy*,
And took a breath, and nodded twice, and started it
again.

Suddenly came caution with an upflung eyelash,
Sweeping the surroundings with an eye like ice,
While you whispered the winner of the three o'clock
at Sandown
Or the name of the little man with nylons at a price.

Then at last you took a breath and stood there silent,
Listening and frowning, serious and sage,
While they read you (apparently) a page or two of
Bradshaw,
And you nodded your acknowledgment and heard
another page.

The rain fell steadily. The day grew darker.
I hunched my shoulders and waited for a while.
And suddenly the door slammed, and you were going
by me,
Hurrying: and as you went you swept me with a
smile—

Swept me with a smile that you brought from in the
call-box
And carried like a firebrand for all the world to see,
Leaving me for recompense a flash of borrowed brilliance
And wonder at what women are and what men let
them be.

P. M. HUBBARD



"You can't expect a creative artist to bother with darning."

SHOOTING FOR THE POT

I AM not keen on hunting; but we were suffering from a meat shortage in the small Rhodesian town we were visiting, and our host suggested that Cox and I should bag some guinea-fowl for dinner.

"Guinea-fowl," I said dubiously. "I've read about them, but I don't know what they look like."

"Let's just shoot things," said Cox. "We can sort them out afterwards."

"A guinea-fowl," said our host, "can easily be recognized. It has a dark-grey plumage and fleshy wattles on the cheeks."

"Fleshy wattles?"

"Yes, fleshy wattles."

"Shouldn't give us much trouble," said Cox. "Can't be many birds with fleshy wattles on their cheeks."

"Go down to the thickets near the river," continued our host, giving me a .22 rifle and a box of ammunition.

I took the rifle.

"Is this big enough?" I said.

"Yes, quite big enough for a guinea-fowl. You must not blow it to pieces. We want to eat it."

"Perhaps we shall come across a leopard."

"The last leopard round here was shot ten years ago."

"Perhaps it has recovered," said Cox.

On our way to what we hoped were the haunts of the guinea-fowl Cox and I did not say much at first. At last I took the plunge.

"What are wattles?" I said.

"You don't know what wattles are?" said Cox incredulously.

"No."

"Well, they are the kind of things—"

"—that guinea-fowl have on their cheeks," I concluded.

"There you are," said Cox triumphantly. "It shows what you can do if you try."

"I wonder if we shall be able to recognize a wattle when we see one?"

"Well, an ordinary wattle might flummox us, but I don't think we shall have much difficulty with a fleshy wattle. Besides, I know what a guinea-fowl sounds like."

"You do?"

"Yes, it goes ka-ak, ka-ak, ka-ak, ka-ak, ka-ak, ka—"

"Stop it," I cried. "You will frighten the guinea-fowl away. Look here, I can't shoot. You do the shooting."

"No, no," said Cox. "You shoot and I'll watch. If we are attacked by a leopard we can take it in turns to shoot."

We were approaching the thickets.

"Listen," I said, "I think I can hear a guinea-fowl."

"That's not a guinea-fowl," said Cox. "A guinea-fowl goes ka-ak, ka-ak, ka-ak, ka-ak, ka-ak, ka—"

"Be quiet," I said.

"But this one is going chirrr, chirrr, chirrr, chirrr, eh—"

"Yes, yes, but this one may be a different kind of guinea-fowl," I said. "I happen to know, for instance, that there is one guinea-fowl that has a short tail and another guinea-fowl that has a long tail."

There was a slight pause. I could see that Cox was impressed.

"You know both these birds?" he said.

"They are different species," I said coldly.

"You're not thinking of guinea-pigs?"

It was at this moment that a bird walked across our path about thirty yards ahead. I raised the gun to my shoulder.

"Don't shoot till you see the fleshy wattles on his cheeks," said Cox.

I took careful aim.

"Close one eye," said Cox. "If it starts running open both eyes."

"I have already closed one eye. Has it started running yet? I can't see it with my one eye any more."

"I don't know whether it's started running," said Cox. "It's gone."

"Gone?" I said, lowering my gun.

"Yes, into the undergrowth. You should have shot it."

"If you didn't talk so much I would have."

"Never mind. Guinea-fowl are gregarious. There's probably lots more around."

The guinea-fowl that got away, however, was not so gregarious as most guinea-fowl; for we did not see another until just before sunset when we were nearly home. I drew a bead on it, and my finger was squeezing the trigger.

"Stop," said Cox.

"I won't," I said, squeezing.

"There's a cow just behind it."

It was only too true. I dared not risk a shot.

"You should have shot," said Cox after dinner. "It would have solved the meat shortage."

"But the cow . . ." I said.

"Yes," said Cox.

BAN THIS

IT is obvious by now that a split in the cabinet is imminent. We may not have much idea of what is going on. Very few, in fact, are able to speak with any real authority on the subject; but those who are in the best position to judge are certain that the split is coming soon, and that it will be complete.

We know of course that we have been grossly misled from the outset. It has all happened before; the flattery, the cheap appeal to sentiment, the flaunting showmanship—the ingredients are familiar. Yet somehow we are content to let the tricksters get away with it.

Our chosen representatives, who are supposed to be looking after our

interests, are, for all practical purposes, quite ineffective. They enjoy their brief period of publicity; but to what end? If we really think, we know that their appointment is a meaningless concession to persuade the more simple among us that we are not being deceived.

Well, it cannot last much longer. Some of the public are faintly amused, some apathetic, a few sick with apprehension; but observers in all parts of the Empire are agreed that this must be the end.

It is. The saw has passed right through the cabinet, the halves are drawn apart, and the young lady leaps out and makes her bow.



THE ENGLISH, BY HOLBEIN

IN spite of the number of times, in the last four or five hundred years, when, according to its critics, the Island Race has changed out of all recognition, there is reason to think that it looked very much the same in the days of King Henry VIII as it does now.

The best evidence of this is given by the English portrait drawings of Holbein. It may be gathered from the selection of them in the Royal Academy Winter Exhibition. As a whole this rich miscellany of paintings and drawings by Masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is a little difficult to get in focus: but the visitor who begins to falter among its Carraccis, Baroccis, Carlo Dolcis and Guido Renis can turn back to the Holbeins as to a show within a show, and instead of trying to sort out the many threads of the late Renaissance can examine the national face and reflect on the magic with which it was drawn. Somehow it is more national in Holbein's drawings than in his paintings, because drawing is more intimate: also, as the artist has to leave out a good deal, he concen-



trates on the most salient points—and no one knew better than Holbein how—by a few strokes, very precise and severe . . . the faintest touch of shadow . . . nice teamwork of the iron hand and velvet crayon—to make a real person appear on a piece of paper. The magic, however, does not stop there: the person is not only real—but hauntingly familiar.

There is that Tudor young man with a large silky moustache (so delicately touched in with coloured chalk). You might see him any day in Piccadilly and guess he was not long out of the R.A.F. Or the Lady Audley of Henry's time, who has never died but is certainly still to be found in an English county, perhaps in these straitened days a member of what Lord Simon has called the "indigentry," taking the old car to shop in the local town and plodding around the home farm in gumboots. That girl with a round face is undoubtedly, as the catalogue states, Frances de Vere, daughter of the fifteenth Earl of Oxford, and lived from 1517 to 1577; but she is, equally without doubt, the young

woman one saw the other day in an office, bent over her typewriter with the serious and even enigmatic expression which comes of launching a thousand business letters. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey—he is the English poet of any age, give him a wing collar and a largely knotted tie and with his pony crop and bony profile he belongs to the eighteen-nineties; while many a square-cut beard is as reminiscent of artistic Bloomsbury in the twentieth century as of Whitehall Palace in the sixteenth. It is notable that Holbein makes no confusion between his Continental and his English sitters. His Germans and Swiss are Germans and Swiss: his Erasmus is clearly not of the same race as his Sir John More, though maybe he did not think of their characters at all but simply of measurements between lip and jaw, the exact contours of that curious piece of hilly country which is called the nose. The accuracy of this superlative map-making, applied to the English he knew, may be gauged by their likeness to the English he did not know—who were still a few centuries in the offing. WILLIAM GAUNT

THE DÉBUT

THE AMATEUR ACTRESS

HERE is myself come true.
My voice, my laughter;
my stance
Firm on the boards of the
stage
Bigger than life; my hands
Extending my mind
And speaking me plain to the
audience.

See my impatience expressed
In a lift, or a flick of the
wrist:
Pain—in the clench of the fist:
Or with a downward sweep
Of the fan of the digits and
thumb
A difficult suitor dismissed
As I sweep from the room!

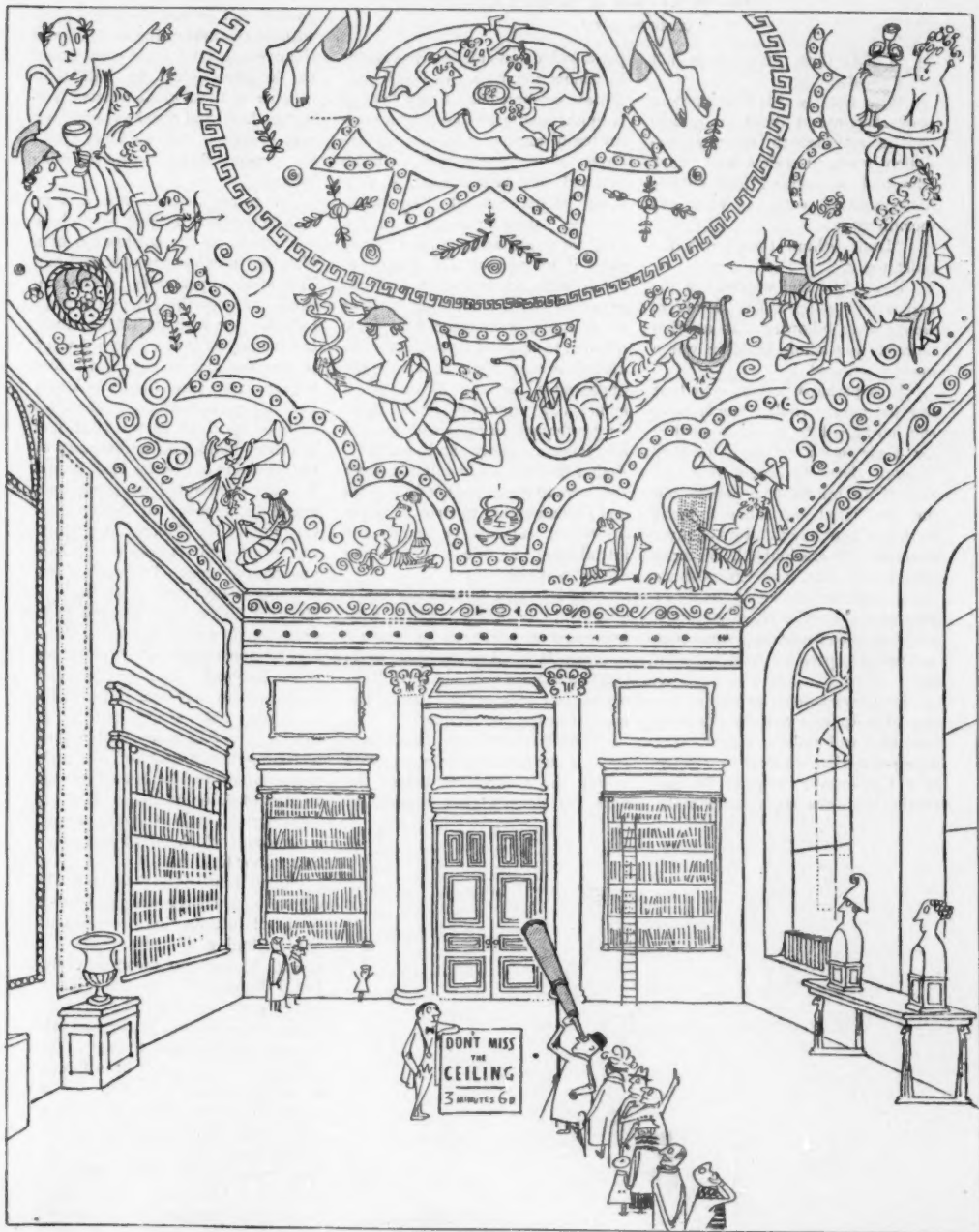
Watch how I shape my lips
To throw out my words: how my
tongue
Touches the tips of my teeth
With scarcely a passage of breath
To blur the clean sound.
When my mouth grows round
A quiver begins at the corner—
The muscles all tremble with
pleasure
Till the whole of my being is
laughing
To hear myself talking.

Friends and relations who come
Clap and congratulate—
Then the quick-change to the normal
of home;
The conventional, cold understatement

*Of self only half-size: the shyness,
The critical glances, that hint
"Dramatic exaggerations
Not suiting domestic conditions."*

Here my emotions have play.
Quite unashamed I may boast,
Swagger, and so fit the bill:
Or sulk, and withdraw in my shell.
I am proud—I can flaunt!
Humbled—in meekness kneel down
Making an ample apology
Fearing no loss of prestige.

I can play the old game with my eyes,
Let the green jealousy rage,
Hate—and be bitter,
Love—and grow sweeter,
Be the Big Me—on the stage.



THE WRITER'S CRAFT

V. TOPICALITY

"I TELL thee, man, it is not topical!"

With these words a prosperous bookseller, round about the middle of the seventeenth century, impatiently waved aside a needy hack who had intercepted him outside his premises with a work on incendiaryism.

"Look behind thee," was the quiet reply.

From door and windows of the bookseller's shop thick clouds of smoke were billowing. In another moment the whole building was a mass of flames!

It is perhaps just as well that few journalists to-day would have the hardihood to secure topicality for their work in such reckless fashion. Nevertheless, it is a fact that if an informative article can but be based on some incident fresh in the public mind its chances of acceptance are doubled. We must see, then, that our articles are topical. How are we to do it? I propose to consider three methods, and I shall continue to assume that we wish to specialize in articles on apes.

First, we can write our article immediately, and wait for the news item that will make it topical. Let us suppose that we hear by chance of a Government scheme for importing baboons on a large scale,

perhaps for some piece of pageantry in connection with the Festival of Britain celebrations. A new type of trap has been worked out by a committee of experts, and a jungle-to-coast shuttle transport scheme planned. We write our article, then—we might call it "Operation Baboon"—leaving a space at the head for an introduction, and taking care, if we aim at *The Times*, to finish with an ingenious and unexpected twist, combining it, if at all possible, with some neat little allusion to classical mythology. The article is now filed, to await the appearance in the Press of a sufficiently apposite news item. Any reference to apes will do, and all sources, likely and unlikely, should be thoroughly combed, from zoo news to quotations from *Pravda* and Parliamentary reports. Directly something suitable is found, the introduction is filled in and the article sent off.

Another way of securing topicality is to pack our articles with references to matters of current interest. It is not always easy to do this in a natural way, but the following extract may serve to show the possibilities of the method:

"Gorillas attain a formidable size. If our gallant cricketers cared to try the experiment before the next Test Match, they would find

difficulty in laying out a dozen gorillas end to end along the pitch without disturbing the wickets, and the average Boat Race crew would be far outweighed by half their number of these great beasts. The hair on head and shoulders has been said—perhaps by sufferers from the present shortage—to resemble tobacco."

A third method—not a very satisfactory one, I think—is to base our article on the celebration of a birthday or centenary of some kind. The ideal opportunity, of course, would be something like Darwin's birthday, or perhaps Du Chaillu's, but it may be that we do not want to wait for such an occasion before taking up our pen. Let us look at a few dates, remembering that we write on apes. January 1, 1951, was the three hundredth anniversary of the crowning of Charles II at Scone. To have attempted anything here would be a policy of desperation. On January 10, 1840, penny postage was introduced. A keen man might just glance through Trollope's *Autobiography*—no more. The death of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley took place on February 21, 1851. Now here, it seems to me, we are on rather firmer ground. The gap between Frankenstein's monster and a gorilla is really not great, and it is not by any means impossible that a thorough combing of Shelley's poems would yield a few references to apes of different kinds. There is certainly a little thought about chameleons which might well serve as a minor link.

In addition to the three methods I have outlined there is the system of direct intervention described at the beginning of this article. I should hesitate to recommend it, but I know full well from bitter experience the shifts and devices to which the ambitious young journalist may be compelled to resort. In the past I have myself been forced to adopt methods calling for a rather free interpretation of the law of the land. Readers may recall the extraordinary epidemic of pier fires that broke out in this country a good many years ago. At the time I was specializing in—but no matter, no matter.

T. S. WATT



Adamson

BOOKING OFFICE

Mind and Place

IN many nineteenth-century books of travel a defiantly ordinary mind described everything in terms of its difference from the narrow circle that meant home. "Eothen" was the great exception, and even "Eothen" was often parochial. In the last thirty years travel-writing has attracted a new type of author. It has become a highbrow activity. When Robert Byron suggested in "The Road to Oxiana" that a traveller should be judged by the books he took with him as well as by the reports he brought back, he was trailing his coat; but his influence has prevailed. Now we expect as high a standard of knowledge, sensibility and writing in the literature of travel as in any other branch of literature.

Mr. Gerald Brennan's *The Face of Spain*, an account of a three-months' return to a country in which he had lived for many years, attempts to satisfy curiosity about the landscape, the pictures, the social structure and the history, past and contemporary, of the country. I found his history and political reporting more successful than his evocation of sights, for which his style is not quite equal to the demands he makes on it. His sympathy with the Republic does not blind him to its share of the atrocities that made the Civil War hideous; but he does make a successful attempt to explain why Spanish politics are atrocious. His reported conversations, while repetitive, build up an indictment of the Franco regime which is far more convincing than the routine polemics of most of its opponents. The theme of the book is starvation, not springing from the deficiencies of Nature but due primarily to the Spanish individualism, hatred of communal action and tolerance of graft. When Mr. Brennan switches from the domestic budget of one of his informants to a discussion of El Greco or the Moors or Toledo he is still pursuing the same inquiry in another field. He brings all his knowledge and all his penetration to the attempt to paint an integrated picture of a country he loves, and this effort at integration is perhaps what the older travellers lacked.

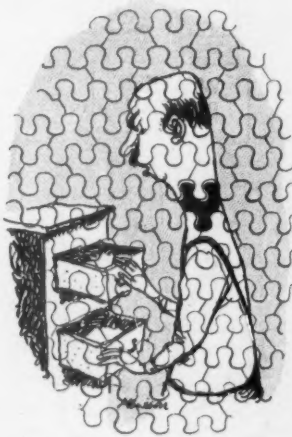
Mr. Patrick O'Donovan's *For Fear of Weeping* is so well written that one almost loses sight of South-East Asia in admiration at the swift precision of his style. As Foreign Correspondent of *The Observer* he saw something of the bandit warfare in Malaya, the tottering steps of the new state of Burma, the fantastic political life of Siam, the Nationalist defeat in China, Hong Kong's breathless alertness, and the colonial wars of the French in Indo-China and the Dutch in Indonesia. His verbal snapshots give both foreground and background and, while the book is a record of personal experience and not a political commentary, it does succeed in giving an idea of the soil off which Communism feeds and of the lack of economic barriers to its advance.

Mr. Patrick Leigh Fermor's *The Traveller's Tree* is also a personal record. It describes a journey through

the Caribbean Islands, in company with Mr. A. Costa, whose photographic supplement adds considerably to the book. Mr. Leigh Fermor tells us nothing about himself. All we see of him is his curiosity and his learning, especially in languages and religions. He is a deliberate writer and a good one, though his prose lacks the crisp brilliance of Mr. O'Donovan's and some of his set pieces are overwhelmed in an appropriately tropical profusion. His landscapes and architectural descriptions build up into a rather undifferentiated West Indianness. He is at his best when most excited, and what excite him are odd survivals and the cross-fertilization of cultures. He is impressive on Voodoo, that strange mixture of African tribal deities and French Catholicism, with its demonic possession, invocations of the saints, and gods with French names and frock-coats. The Lord of Cemeteries, Baron Samedi, is a horrifying conception. Mr. Leigh Fermor has a full mind and a versatile apprehension. Robert Byron would have approved of his inclusion of libraries among the pleasures of Caribbean travel. R. G. G. PRICE

The Berrys of the Vine

No one is better fitted than Mr. H. Warner Allen to do justice to the mellow history of that beautiful old shop, *Number Three Saint James's Street*, now Berry Brothers and Rudd, where a continuous chain of proprietors, drawn from several associated families, has reigned for two hundred and fifty years. Originally an Italian warehouse, it dispensed under the Sign of the Coffee Mill the fashionable innovations of coffee, tea and chocolate, and in the middle of the eighteenth



"Seen my collar, Mildred?"

century dealt in heraldic art as well. The first of the Berrys, wine-merchants from Exeter, arrived in 1803, but groceries were not finally ousted until 1895. Since then the firm has won wide fame as a hospitable academy of the vine and as a sturdy guardian of tradition. Thanks to its long habit of recording the weights of its customers, as shown on the old coffee scales, Mr. Warner Allen has been able to add to his delightful account much agreeable information on the ups and downs of great men.

E. O. D. K.

"En marche vers Bethléem"

Survivors of Victorian childhoods tell us that it is not nearly so piquant to be naughty where there are no rules to break. Nor are courtships so entertaining without chaperons to evade. Miss G. B. Stern's gallant attempt to revive "the delightful and popular family novel" is up against difficulties which never beset Charlotte Yonge or Louisa Alcott. Nevertheless, the cast of *Ten Days of Christmas* consists mainly of young people—grown-ups figuring chiefly as parents. Moral dilemmas being scarce, one can only be tiresome; and the house-party at Brambleford is tiresome to the life and to the limit. It is set, however, to rehearsing Ghéon's "Christmas in the Market Place" by an undergraduate aesthete "fascinated by the spectacle of a Nativity Play acted by children brought up not to know a thing about religion." The triumph, partial as it is, of the play over the cast—a triumph reinforced by the intervention of an actor of genius—provides a memorable curtain.

H. P. E.



Enchanted Streets

In "After London" Richard Jefferies pictured the reconquest by nature of territory wrested from her by the arrogance of man. Leonard Dubkin, in *Enchanted Streets*, demonstrates how flimsy is even the seemingly solid structure of the castles men have built to consolidate so ephemeral a conquest. For, as we see through his eyes, we are but a beleaguered garrison who hold a city, and the Fifth Column of nature is in our midst in a thousand diverse disguises, from mayflies dancing their orderly love-dance in a suburban garden to raiding herring-gulls openly on reconnaissance over a city lake. That the setting is American gives added point to the author's theme: that all men's cities are but vain ramparts against bird and beast, insect and flower, and tree. But once your heart has, so to speak, gone over to the enemy, with what enchantment you will, like Mr. Dubkin, walk the streets.

R. C. S.

"Die-hard"

The term "die-hard" in recent years has undergone a considerable change of meaning. In its original significance it implied courage, endurance, loyalty, and a resolute refusal to admit defeat; in its modern sense it has acquired an implication of ridicule, not to say opprobrium. It is in its older sense that it might be aptly applied to the hero of Mr. J. H. B. Peel's novel *A Man's Life*. The book tells the story of Adam Sibthorpe's struggle against adverse circumstances—agricultural depression, changed economic conditions, and the grinding pressure of taxation—to preserve the inheritance handed down to him from the days of the Conqueror. Every page breathes the author's love of the English countryside and its people, of Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns in particular; and the book forms a moving tribute to a class—the lesser landed gentry—which has served England faithfully in the past, and has perhaps suffered more than any other as a result of the changing shape of the social structure.

C. F. S.

Books Reviewed Above

- The Face of Spain*. Gerald Brenan. (Turnstile Press, 15/-)
For Fear of Weeping. Patrick O'Donovan. (MacGibbon and Kee, 12/6)
The Traveller's Tree. Patrick Leigh Fermor; with photographs by A. Costa. (Murray, 21/-)
Number Three Saint James's Street. H. Warner Allen. (Chatto and Windus, 12/6)
Ten Days of Christmas. G. B. Stern. (Collins, 10/6)
Enchanted Streets. Leonard Dubkin. (Hurst and Blackett, 12/6)
A Man's Life. J. H. B. Peel. (Arthur Barker, 12/6)

Other Recommended Books

- The Great Exhibition: 1851*. Yvonne French. (The Harvill Press, 18/-) Spirited and well-documented history of the Crystal Palace, with a commentary on the exhibits. Neat, light and learned.
Dangerous By Nature. Manning Coles. (Hodder and Stoughton, 9/6) Efficient thriller set in South America. Much local colour, movement and mystery. Tommy Hambledon escapes from many perils, including eighteen atomic bombs.

SIDEWAYS THROUGH POLITICS

MY friend Harrington, who thinks about politics deeply but not very often, tells me how M.P.s are passing their time during the recess. Some, he says, are occupied in their constituencies. Others are taking a temporary rest from public duties. All are asking: What will the New Year bring forth?

Expect many things in the months to come, Harrington says. New names will catch the public eye. Whose are they? Time alone will tell. But be sure that Premier Attlee will not willingly surrender high office. Be sure, too, that ex-Premier Winston Churchill will maintain his vigorous leadership of the Conservatives. And in Clement Davies the Liberals have a leader of determination and one, withal, well versed in the ways of Parliamentary warfare.

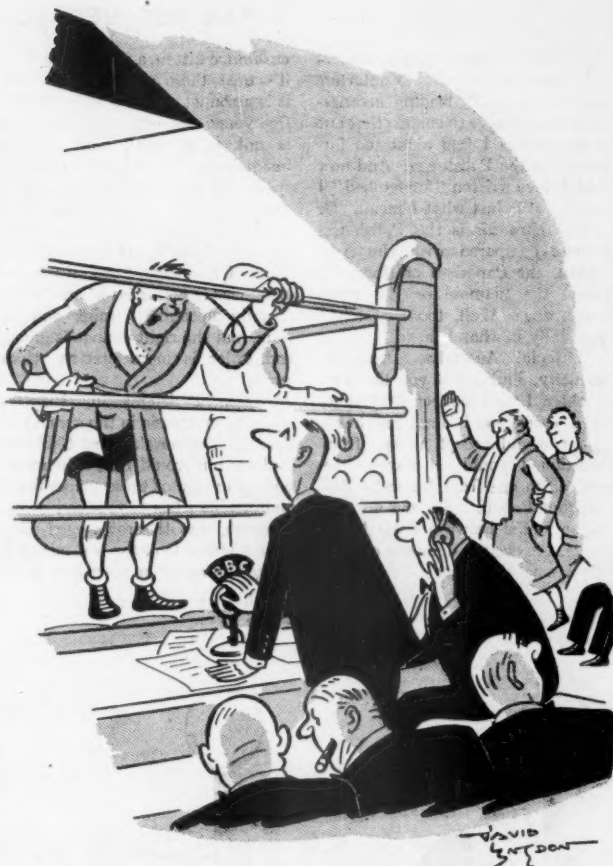
Watch Aneurin Bevan, Harrington says, waving his arms. For why? He has personality. As an orator he is outstanding. Yet the Opposition remain critical of his policy. *Therein lies the danger...*

For whom? For Aneurin Bevan.

Then there is Anthony Eden, Harrington adds. Many hold him destined for high office in a future Conservative Government. His grasp of foreign affairs is wide. He has travelled. On both sides of the House he is respected. All quarters canvass his views. Mark this, says Harrington. For it is significant.

No man is born unto himself alone; Who lives unto himself, he lives to none.

Expect, too, much talk of a General Election, he continues. The Government's majority is small. Their position is precarious. The time to ease the deadlock may come sooner. It may come later. But come it must.



"Well, the dressing-gown's a sort of pale magenta with pastel grey facings, and the trunks you could say were almost carise with an emerald insertion..."

Wherein do the parties differ? Harrington jabs with his forefinger and states that the Conservatives are critical of Socialism. They cannot approve the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange. They favour fair and free competition. They are believers in private enterprise, with adequate safeguards.

Not so the Socialists. Their faith is in the State. Permanent controls there must be, they declare. The big steel grab must go through regardless.

Torn and divided, the Liberal party...

But I am no longer paying attention.

For why?

Because I know that I shall soon see it all in print.

"RAFFLES SHOULD BE HONEST."

Headline in "Manchester Guardian"

Wouldn't it rather spoil the story?

A FAR-FETCHED EGG

NOTHING I say on this subject must be allowed to interfere with the nation's feeding arrangements, but I have to confess that one of the things I find a bit too far-fetched is the Polish egg. And now that I have written "far-fetched" I see that it is just what I mean. Or is it? How far is the Polish egg fetched compared with the Australian, the Canadian or (for all I know) the Siamese or the Polynesian egg? Well, too far-fetched spiritually is what I mean.

Canada, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Finland, if you like . . . all these I can connect with eggs, and I assure you it's not just habit . . . I would accept an egg from Palestine, I would not start at the sight of an egg from Iceland. But not from Poland. For me no link can be forged between Poland and an egg. An egg is a domestic object, it is a smooth object . . . it is a

cushion, a kitten, a rose in a vase . . . it is neat, there are no corners on it, it is a sonnet, never a tract of wild, free verse. An egg is not exotic, it is not a wayward work of the imagination, it is not (properly speaking) an adventure; an egg is simplicity, it is familiarity, it is home. How can all this be got into line with Poland? An egg has something of the Anglo-Saxon quality—it belongs in countries where (traditionally speaking) trains run to time, and the right change is given, and order is more precious than grace.

Spain I delight in, Italy is my passion, Russia in the persons of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov I adore; but would I ever dream of looking in any of these places for a comfortable little brown hen or an exquisite, smooth brown egg? No, what I would look for is a mixture of rice and chilis, or roast goat with

rosemary, or beetroot soup with sour cream. There is a certain naturalness and a certain unnaturalness of association, a certain fitness and a certain unfitness. If anyone says to me "Poland" I think of "The Nigger of the Narcissus" and Madame Curie in her garret in Paris, and wild country, and wolves, and sealskin caps with ear-pieces, and words without any vowels in them, and those people of strange and otherwise unidentifiable beauty that we used to see about in London during the war. Anything, anything I might expect to come out of Poland . . .

Anything except an egg.

§ §

"For sale, three-wheel bicycle, suit child 3 to 7 years."

Adet. in "Whitatable Times"

Preferably ignorant of classics.

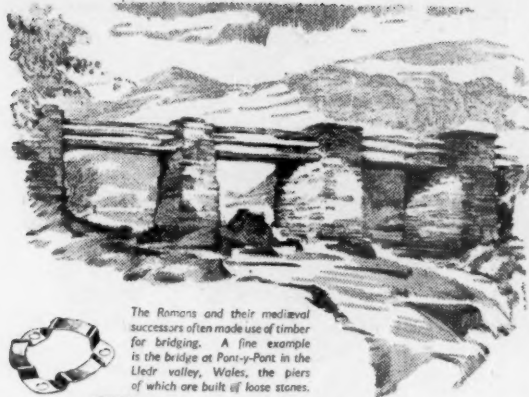


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The Romans and their medieval successors often made use of timber for bridging. A fine example is the bridge at Pont-y-Pont in the Lledr valley, Wales, the piers of which are built of loose stones.



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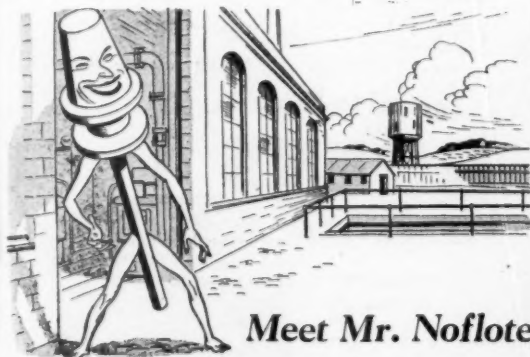
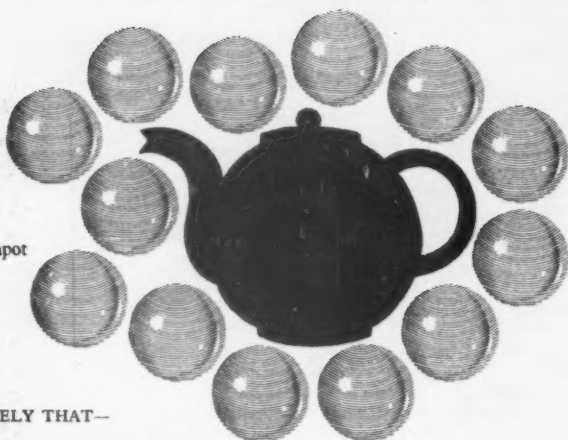
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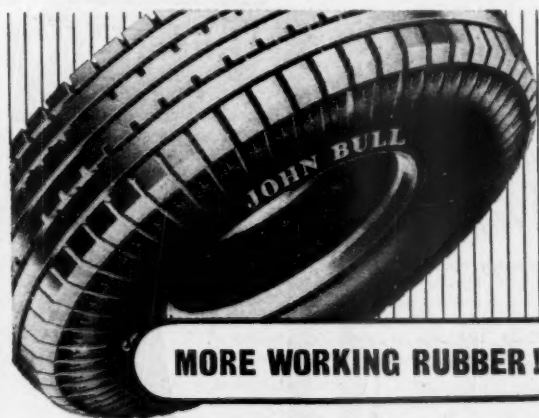
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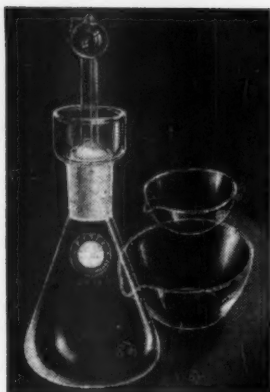
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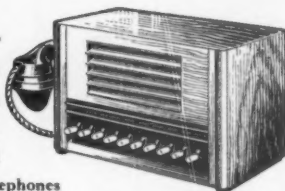
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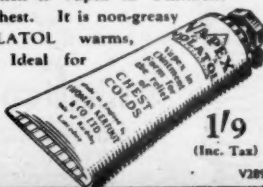
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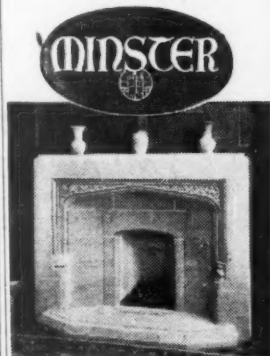
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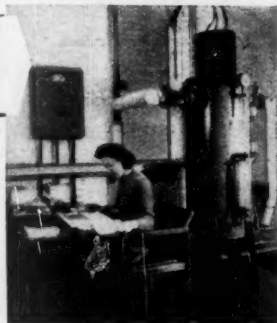
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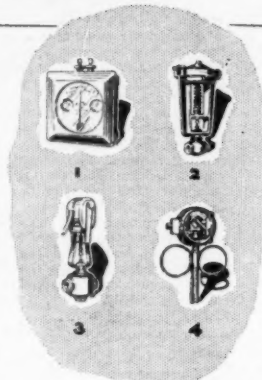
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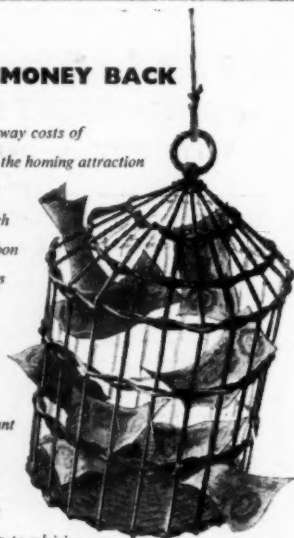
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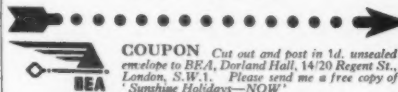
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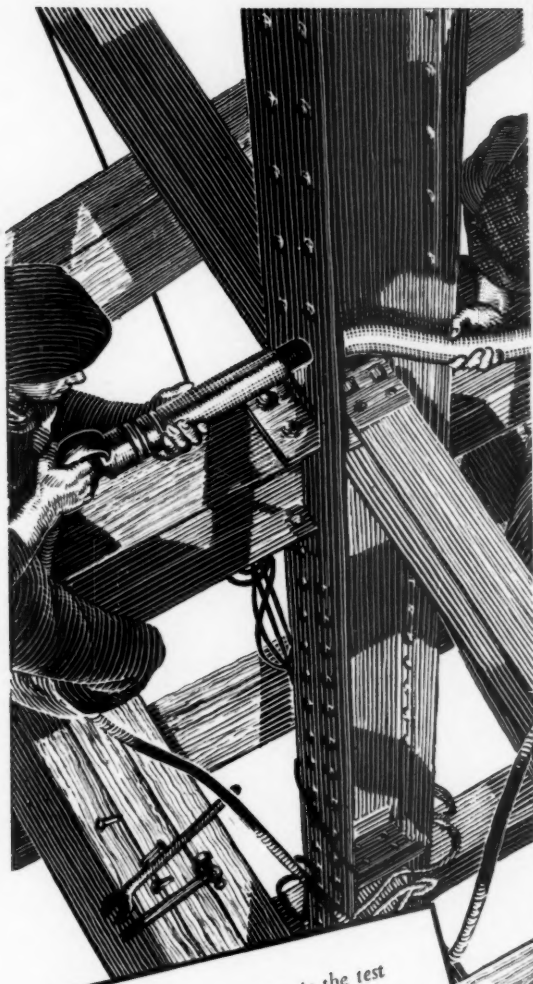
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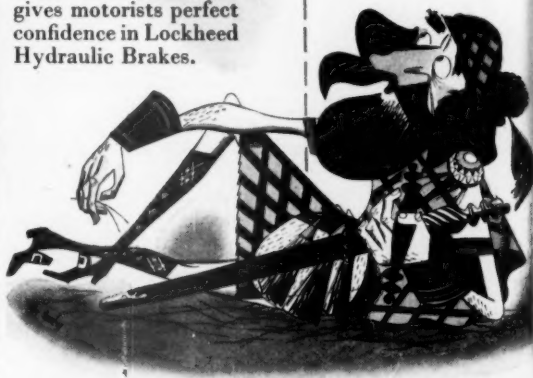
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